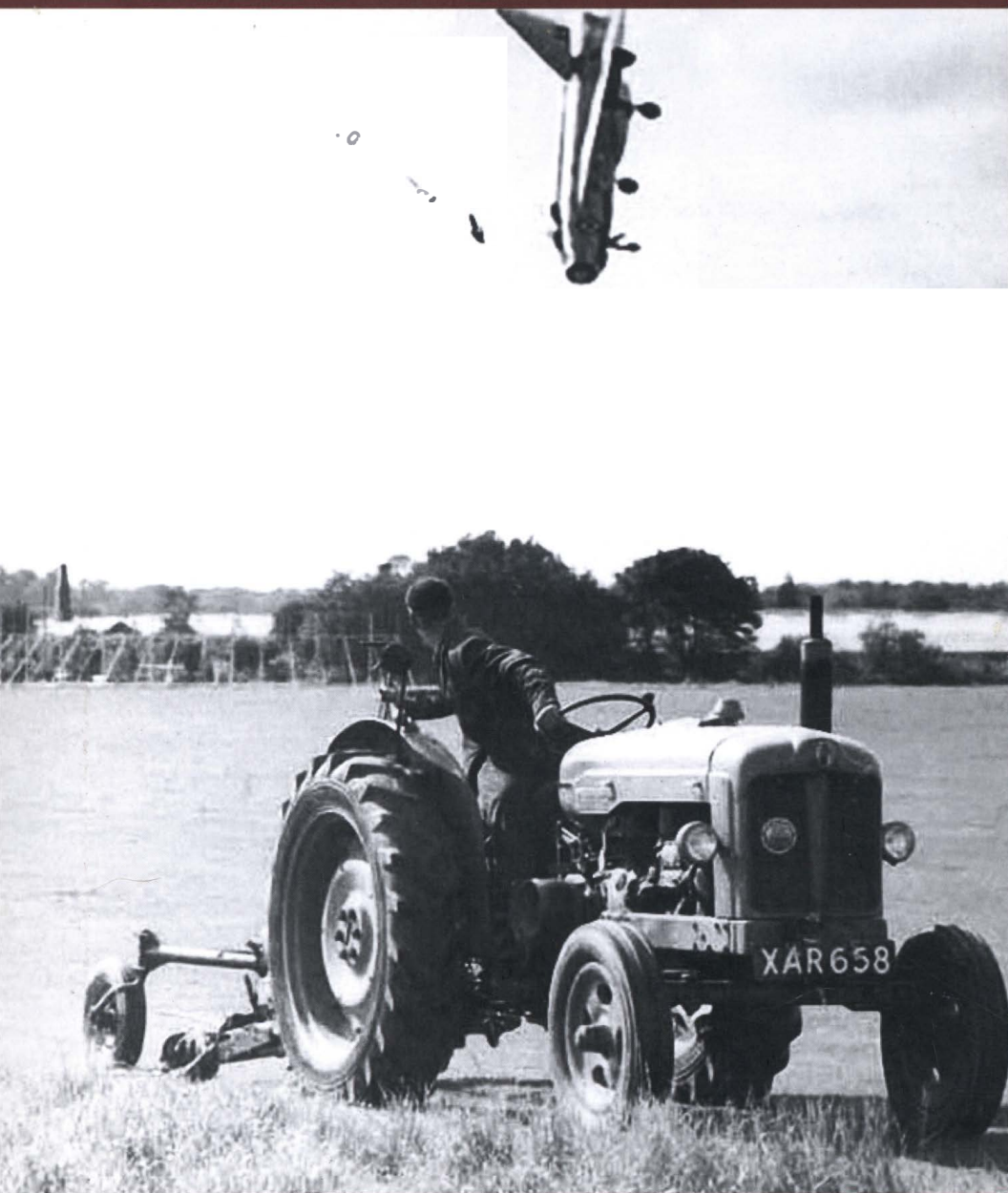


# Anarcho-Pessimism

the collected writings of  
Laurence Labadie



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*For better or worse, pessimism without  
compromise lacks public appeal.*

Thomas Ligotti



## Anarcho-Pessimism: The Lost Writings of Laurance Labadie

Chord

*Collectivism is a “crowd mind” doctrine. To those who have ever been the losers in the unequal, privileged, and despotic struggle for existence, who have not felt the glory and the satisfaction of conquering obstacles and the achievement of aims, the thought of peace and security is soothing and endearing. Nevertheless, life is essentially a struggle, and peace, in a sense, stagnation and death. We say of the dead that they are at peace.*

—Laurance Labadie

To those who came to anarchism through the overhyped WTO protests of 2000 or by way of the embarrassingly liberal Occupy spectacle (or even via the punk subculture), the unique anti-capitalist analysis of the American individualist anarchists (a drastic departure from how most anarchists are discussing capitalism today) is likely to seem anachronistic and slightly alien, as the tradition itself has been rendered almost invisible through scholarly neglect and the pervasive a-historicism that seems to abort every attempt at a serious anarchist revival in the United States. Almost all the prominent individualists of this school were representative of a type of anarchist that is now almost nonexistent—so much that, if mentioned at all, they appear as far-away specters and it seems unbelievable that they were ever a force to be reckoned with. The American individualist school propagated their devastatingly logical version of anarchism largely in the pages of Benjamin Tucker’s invigorating journal *Liberty*, between the years 1881 and 1908, and carried the general anarchist mistrust of external authority several steps further than the communist



and syndicalist camps, denying that the individual owes allegiance to **anything** except his or her self, and re-conceptualizing interpersonal relations (particularly economic ones) on a voluntary contract basis—contracts that can be terminated at will and without recourse to societal or legal approval. This language of “contracts” reveals the influence of Proudhon’s economic theories on Tucker and the other American individualists, who became its most articulate expositors in the United States (taking Proudhon’s mutualist anarchism into a characteristically American direction by synthesizing its social aspects with frontier-style individual sovereignty) and developed its implications in various related fields like currency, resource and land monopoly. It was this embracing of *mutualist* economic principles that most strikingly separated Tucker and his camp from European individualist anarchists and it’s also why the American individualists still fall outside the simple approximations and traditional distinctions of “left” and “right”. *Liberty* was a fiery journal devoted to the free play and clash of ideas and not to the exchange of polite nothings; remarkable for the consistently high quality of its content and for the rancor of its heated discussions, *Liberty* grew into a philosophical battleground gyrating around the tension between the sovereignty of the individual (sometimes expressed in terms of self-ownership) and the hypothetical economic reforms proposed by Proudhon. The ideas debated in *Liberty* covered a wider range than just Proudhonian mutualism of course. In addition to a critical disposition towards all authority, Benjamin Tucker, as editor of *Liberty*, had an omnivorous passion for numerous intellectual fields and the arts and added cultural sophistication to the political interests of anarchism, publishing of a great deal of European, and especially French, avant-garde literature (including works by

John Henry Mackay, Oscar Wilde, Emile Zola, and Felix Pyat). In the early years of *Liberty*, Tucker believed—as had Josiah Warren, Proudhon, and Ly-sander Spooner before him—that anarchism was based on "a principle of nature," and that a moral argument was sufficient to establish the validity of anarchism. By the late 1880s, though, Tucker was writing that morality and natural rights were unprovable abstractions and myths; this shift in orientation came about after his exposure to Max Stirner's philosophical masterwork *The Ego and His Own* (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*). Stirnerite egoism, as interpreted by the individualist anarchists, claimed that enlightened self-interest was the realistic basis of human conduct and that the acting individual and no one else should be the beneficiary of his or her own actions. With this insistence came the rejection of altruism and of any obligations except those assumed by voluntary contract—and with these printed assertions began the most controversial period in *Liberty's* long publishing history!

Tucker and the other American individualists presented a much more nuanced and practical alternative to the classical communist reading of malicious capitalism (and to that fabulous edifice of abstractions we call Marxism). As mutualists, their unfailing principle was that freedom of exchange is the foundation of all freedoms. To enlarge exchange is to liberate the individual; to circumscribe it is to enslave them. The American individualists felt that a genuinely free market and the unhindered practice of competition would organically develop into a stateless, non-monopolistic society that would return the full product of labor to workers—which is one of many reasons they opposed the forced collectivized control of the economy (by one vast monopoly in the hands of the State) that communists and socialists advocated. Instead, the American in-

individualists felt that the most successful means of opposition come through more critical methods, such as the slow, skeptical dissolution of power and reigning ideas through a rugged interrogation of the foundations' of one's own belief systems. Tucker and his accomplices envisioned a revolution that was more gradual, more subtle, and more far-reaching in its consequences than the one-dimensional class-struggle formula promoted by their communist colleagues—an evolutionary revolution that occurred on the intellectual and economic plane and that was only superficially political. The conscious egoists in Tucker's faction also didn't busy themselves constructing theories of individual or social *rights*. They supported Stirner's observation that "right" is an illusion that follows might and based their hopes of individual liberation, and of the dissolution of the State, on a gradual awakening of the individual to his/her own ability to do without the State. This new-found dignity of the individual will then inevitably renounce external support and assert the inherent power of self and repudiate the State's pretenses of being a patron and guide. This unforgivingly self-reliant version of anarchism requires more intelligence than most people possess or independence than they can muster and makes it unlikely that American individualism will ever become a resurgent strain within the prevailing desert of contemporary anarchism (where we see a homogenization of anarchism into a bland, anti-statist/anti-capitalist doctrine which is far too accommodating of simplistic thinking and ideological conformity). That being said, there's plenty that's still alive and kicking in the stinging old issues of *Liberty* and they're substantially more interesting than most of the moldering rubbish out there today.

The current lack of awareness regarding the American individualists is puzzling but becomes par-

tially understandable when considering that these are some of the more mysterious and dusty backroads of American anarchism, where one will encounter the ghost-like apparitions of James L. Walker, John Beverley Robinson and a gaggle of other unfamiliar mavericks who receded from view until the publication of James J. Martin's magisterial study *Men Against The State* in 1953, mainly to vanish again into an unspecified historical oblivion. Those willing to follow this weird and wonderful trail, however, will discover a treasure-trove of surprising information and fascinating anarchist folklore. Martin's book provides a constellation of hints and clues, but inevitably all investigative trails will lead researchers to one of the principal exemplars of this tradition: The incomparably pugnacious skeptic and anarcho-pessimist Lurance Labadie. Son of Joseph Labadie of the famed Labadie Collection, Lurance Labadie (1898-1975) eventually grew to out-distance his father as a thinker and a polemicist. Lurance had the good luck to have been in contact most of his life with some of the best that has been written by the American individualist anarchist tradition (a tradition that has become as extinct as the passenger pigeon, a tradition that is now being plagiarized by plutocratic spokesmen of the status quo who claim to be "libertarians"—but whose concept of freedom is actually freedom-by-permission, which enables them to hold on to their ill-gotten gains), and through a series of ingenious counterpoints and elaborations managed to make of it something entirely new and much more threatening. The vanished anarchism of this deep-rooted radical tradition was the mutinous wellspring into which Labadie dipped endlessly throughout his life, but Labadie is set off from both his father and his other individualist predecessors like Tucker by his confrontational tone, his sureness of purpose, and his un-

matched disillusionment regarding the utter emptiness of all human endeavors. During his lifetime, Laurance Labadie, heir of Josiah Warren, Lysander Spooner and Stephen Pearl Andrews, soaked up the hope-fueled anarchism of his father's generation (who were almost blindly enthusiastic about their chances of success) and sharpened and expanded their basic tenets, but his own prickly writings all bore the stamp of a dark pessimism convinced that the bulk of his fellow humans were beyond repair and that "the whole civilization from top to bottom is one gigantic conglomeration of imbecility". If there's a clear black-and-white qualitative divide and declaration of independence between Laurance Labadie and his philosophical mentors, it's in his zest for combat and in the vituperative quality of his depressed communiques to the outside world. The first-generation individualist anarchists may have been the connective tissue uniting Laurance Labadie with some semblance of a heritage, but the vehemence of his contempt for humanity and its authoritarian social structures make it evident that he had no real peers as a disturber of the peace. Blowtorch, bold iconoclast, mocker of precedents and provoker of thought, Labadie carried out his forty-year campaign of individualist anarchism for his own egoistic gratification, not because he thought it was actually attainable, or something people even wanted to hear about. Labadie's lack of manners and total disregard for party lines might make him attractive to the small segment of the anarchist population interested in cleansing their minds of cant and drivel, but his disconsolate, pessimistic conception of existence will repel even more—as the possibility of a happy ending for the human race was simply out of the question to him.

In 1998 Laurance's niece Carlotta Anderson

published a book about her grandfather, Joseph “Jo” Labadie, titled *All-American Anarchist: Joseph A. Labadie and the Labor Movement*. Chapter 17 of said book contains some revealing passages on Laurance’s lifelong pessimistic tendencies that are worth quoting here:

*What troubled Jo most, however, was the aimlessness and despondency of Laurance, the child of his middle age, and his favorite. What was the cause of his son’s pessimism, misanthropy, and depression? Perhaps during his impressionable adolescent years he was infected by the virus of his father’s disillusionment born of the war. If so, he wallowed in that negativism, but lacked his father’s ability to bounce back with cheerfulness, a witty remark, and an abiding faith in the essential good judgment of humanity, if only it were liberated. Whatever demons tormented Laurance, he did not blame them on Jo. When he was himself advanced in years, he described his father as the only person he ever met who was completely lovable his whole life.*

After failing engineering studies in one semester at the University of Michigan, Laurance turned to tool making and became expert at it, but flitted from job to job in the machine and automotive industries, often remaining only a few weeks. By his early thirties, he could list twenty-five workplaces where he had held short-term jobs. Jo was never hesitant to nag Laurance about career moves, but made no attempt to steer him toward anarchism. The young man turned to economics and philosophy on his own in his late twenties, beginning with his father’s favorites, Herbert Spencer and Josiah Warren, and proceeding to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and H.L. Mencken. He announced to his elderly parents in 1927, at the age of twenty-nine, that “nothing means anything.” He pronounced the “whole cosmic process...utter hopelessness and futility.” His father’s reproaches, “smug platitudes,”

infuriated him. He readily confessed to a lack of ambition and to a "hate of everything."

On the way to these hardened, pessimistic conclusions, however, Laurance was to pass through a number of steps, including a belief in progress. Unlike the "progress" that political theories like communism generally promote (which apply supposedly universal principles to the vicissitudes of the real world through an implied end-point, towards which a society, or humanity as a whole, is travelling in linear fashion), Labadie's conception of progress was centered around the liberation of the mind—an evolutionary progress *away* from collectivism and *towards* an age of individualism. The two greatest obstacles to this evolutionary progress were monopoly capitalism and its conjoined twin, the State. Labadie's explanation for the genesis of the State is remarkably consistent with the one German sociologist Franz Oppenheimer later set forth so well: The State was invented by those who wished to escape the dynamics of competitive cooperation—by those who would be robbers through the exercise of political power. Beginning with rape and evolving toward seduction, the purpose of the State has from its inception been to serve the ends of exploiters. Depending upon the moment of history, the State has given, loaned or sold its might to the ascendant class, who have used it first to obtain, and then to maintain, their dominant status. Always an instrument for robbery of the many by the few, the State within the past century has (for strategic reasons) gradually popularized its distribution of the loot. It's no longer just the robber of the many for the benefit of the few; it now poses as the welfare state and pretends to provide for all citizens "from the womb to the tomb." Labadie considered the oppression of the State (and the falsity of its pretended power of paternalism) so obvious that only stupidity could explain the masses

acquiescence to it. Eventually, his scorn for that stupidity led him to view the “masses” as what H.L. Mencken jokingly called *Homo Boobiens*: dull, inferior people herding themselves into large and uniform crowds that lacked the intelligence to understand their own folly and superstitions. By this time, progress was seen as deterioration by Labadie and evolution as a near-impossibility.

*The world is so complicated, tangled, and overloaded that to see into it with any clarity you must prune and prune.*

—Italo Calvino

One of Laurance’s most outstanding qualities as an anarchist thinker was his lean writing style which tends to avoid any excess or extravagant, baroque touches and reduces to an absolute sparseness both his subject matter and his treatment of it. Eschewing unnecessary and hollow verbiage, Labadie choose the compression of simple words and perfected a bare-bones expressive approach of spartan, percussive sentences that have a cumulative effect in their dispassionate precision and powerful insight. With polemical fire and exquisite common sense, Labadie took a knife to the sentimental banalities of the anarchist jingoists and pruned away at the clogged jungle of anarchist clichés (which conveniently mask reality with pretty words) to let in some dark sunlight. Without wasting a word (and utterly confident in any subject he tackled) Labadie poked fun and hurled barbs at everyone and everything (including himself) and in the process produced muscular, unpolished theoretical diamonds that all possess a gloomy charm and inexhaustible wit. Intellectual sloth was his favorite object of derision and he applied a stern criterion to the utopian hyperbole and decorative fantasies of his anarchist contemporaries, mauling ideologies and puncturing their



attendant illusions with a delightfully savage energy.

Through all of Labadie's writings, two very pointed themes stand out: self-subjection (the psychology of subservience) and the essential brittleness of collectivist (particularly, communist) organizational conceptions. Motivated by a deep-seated skepticism toward both the politics of enforced order and the inherent stupidities of communist/socialist revolt, Labadie doubted not the ability to resist authoritarianism, but the ability to resist the authoritarian *resentiment* that is stirred up during revolutions—and the mythically-beneficial effects of such revolutions on the poor peons they're supposed to help. The drooling inanity of *anarcho-communism* fared no better under Labadie's perceptive eye and he skewered their grandiose pretensions of forcing a communal property system on **everyone** while still remaining anarchists in name and theory. The pugilist Labadie knew that thick heads need a good hard whack to break up the cobwebs and he was thrilled to be the one delivering the therapeutic shock treatment that revealed the rot underneath utopian anarchism's smiling façade. Regardless of who he was confronting, Labadie's line of attack always involved removing his enemies clothes, hogtying them, and parading them around the ideological village humiliatingly—destroying them by rendering them ridiculous. It's this willingness to challenge any accepted idea, his *negative* criticism rather than his constructive proposals, that I appreciate most about Labadie. Which is not to say that Labadie didn't have positive/creative ideas regarding anarchist social relations: He did, and these ideas are fleshed out most thoroughly in his writings on mutualism from the 1930's.

Mutualism, as Labadie understood it, follows no *pattern* of any kind and merely furnishes an ungoverned environment for individuals of intelligence

and competency to thrive on liberty's unpredictable, unrestrained and chaotic qualities (where at any given moment and in any given location any number of possible relations between individuals can manifest). Labadie felt that the whole concept of anarchism was opposed to blueprints or central planning in the social field and was exceedingly reluctant to specify the *forms* that anarchist social relations would assume—and instead stressed the enormous range of potential life-ways that would have the opportunity to develop unimpeded under actual Anarchy. In exploring these subjects, the rogue Labadie ends up aggressively goring **everyone's** sacred cows, without fear or favoritism, and drawing conclusions that are bound to be completely unexpected and dislocating to your average, imitative anarchist (to say the least). For example, Labadie takes the sacred, almost-devotional anarchist principle of *cooperation* and turns it on its head, inverting it so fully that it becomes a dubious moral commandment infected with the retrovirus of control. Cooperation among individuals was an excellent and advantageous principle, provided that the individuals concerned were free agents cooperating *voluntarily* for ends they fully accepted, which is entirely distinct from the forced, compulsory cooperation of communism and socialism, where cooperation is seen as a *duty* to either society, the state or humanity (and sometimes all three).

Laurance's intuitive and unerring suspicion toward the ideal of "cooperation" has its antecedents in the anarchist tradition going all the way back to William Godwin (the outstanding example of a peace-loving, individualistic, non-revolutionary *philosophical* anarchist). No one could be further removed from the popular stereotype of the anarchist as a violent bomb-thrower than Godwin, who remained firmly committed throughout his life to extremely moral-

istic principles (as laid down in his *Political Justice*), and who advocated educational efforts as a method for gradually transforming social institutions and relationships in a manner which moves step by step parallel to “the illumination of the public understanding.” Despite his dull moralism, Godwin was extremely clear that he didn’t view the “self-enlightenment” of humans as being in any way connected with legislation or other forms of social coercion, but rather by the unfettered exercise of their own reason, and its liberation from the restrictions imposed upon it by government, majorityism, and inherited, irrational social customs such as marriage and reverence for authority. A person was not “morally” or intellectually improved, in Godwin’s eyes, when, solely in order to avoid judicial penalties, he or she is coerced into preferring the interests of the community to their own interests. The individual members of society or of the State are not like the spokes of a wheel; they aren’t integral parts of a great whole, useless except when bound up with others of their kind into a machine that without its full complement of integral parts is also useless. Godwin’s “paradise to come” was, above all, a community of *individualism*, brought into being by a process of gradual, rational improvement, inspired by an enlightened few, until humans finally become godlike—fearless, intellectually advanced, and competent enough to exercise their own judgment, in perfect freedom, in any situation. Godwin elaborated on his vision of voluntary, individualistic community much further, writing that “Everything that is usually understood by the term “cooperation” is, in some degree, an evil.” Though Godwin recognized the value (and at times, *necessity*) of combining labor power and resources to achieve specific goals, he was wary of the ideal of “cooperation” becoming enthroned as a monarch and viewed it as a scheme

for imprisoning the individual through mandatory, general rules of social conduct. Whether cooperation is enforced through formal or informal laws, cultural customs, or unspoken societal expectations, the result is the same: a long-term binding of destinies is produced and subserviency to the will of the Group is established (interestingly, Freud put forth a very similar critique of cooperation as *sublimation* in *Civilization and Its Discontents*).

When I first became exposed to Labadie's sizzling, high-voltage prose I was overpowered by his authenticity and his spiteful impatience with the low-IQ dolts who comprise the bulk of the populace, both of which had an extraordinarily vitalizing effect on how I began to view the intellectual sluggishness of most of my anarchist acquaintances: this guy was definitely not cut from the average mold! Between strength of writing and force of vision few anarchist writers these days come close to his level of accomplishment and he's more than deserving of every accolade I could throw his way. As I got caught up in feverishly pursuing Labadie's pearls about collectivism, democracy, self-reliance, and herd-psychology it was evident that some spark of opportunistic inspiration or unconscious design was afoot and that something resembling an anthology had begun to coalesce. Buried away in forgotten journals, and including large reams of contemplations from his "hermit years" that have never before been published, were the making of a mountain of a book demolishing all comers—be they socialists, communists, phony free enterprisers or any other manipulative social engineer who claims to speak for "humanity" as a whole and advise universalist prescriptions (usually involuntary ones) for the entire planet. Despite their enormous importance to an anarchist milieu ripe for

reinvention and re-ignition, one significant factor made the assembling of this Labadie material backbreaking: Materially, anarchist journals epitomize the ephemerality of twentieth-century print culture (on par with advertisements, movie posters, comics, and small-town newspapers) and the scarce availability of the periodicals that published Labadie's brilliantly-condescending articles turned this project into a three-year undertaking that involved some considerable digging and library hours. The editing of this material also presented a thousand challenges, not the least of which was Labadie's self-educated coining of neologism's and his erratic spelling and punctuation (some light-handed stylistic editing was done here at times in the interest of readability). And then there was the content itself: extraordinary, obscure, infuriating, scandalous, corrosive and probably unpublishable in this thoughtless age where the vultures of communism are flapping their deathly wings again (just one more manifestation of the functional illiteracy and a-historicism of the anarchist subculture) and threatening to snuff the breath out of critical anarchist theory. There's not much out there as black as Labadie's contemptuous ink and punishing visions of human extinction (self-annihilation through mass stupidity) and I began to view it as something of a personal mission to form a club with these abusive broadsides and bludgeon my lightweight anarchist relations (who seem ill-equipped to cope with wit or irony) over the head with it, repeatedly and violently. Labadie was an autodidactic impresario of words who deflated humanistic pomp and political idiocy with equal proficiency, and though it became clear as I was preparing this "best of" collection that some sort of historical contextualization was warranted, I decided that I would do best to keep the commentary

short (intentionally ignoring a great mass of trivia regarding the guy), as nothing written *about* Labadie could possibly be as enjoyable or as insightful as anything written *by* him. Labadie's excessively, courageously and charmingly negative output was vast and hard to distill, so presented here is my highly subjective cherry-picking from an unimaginable wealth of *intelligent* anarchist writing. I've gathered together all of his watershed essays from the 1930's (like *Reflections on Liberty* and *Mental Attitudes*) as well as a plethora of enduring monuments to social pessimism from the concluding era of his one-man anarchist tumult. Despite their disposable nature, his off-hand journal entries or "scribblings" (which often found him in a self-confessional mood) rank among his greatest achievements and I've also included at least five of these diary-entries in Section 3 of this book—The Misanthropic Years.

Could Labadie's stark, anguished ruminations be a commercial success, a "blockbuster of bleakness," so to speak? Probably not. But would they rattle the cage of spook-haunted anarchist doctrine and rule-books? Most definitely! Labadie's sour, despairing sensibilities fly in the face of conventional anarchist tropes and run completely counter to the blabbering, feigned radicalism of the current fish-tank anarchist scene in the US (in all of its sanctimonious, intellectually-sterile, and censorious guises). The essays gathered here were chosen to showcase Labadie's commanding strengths as a theorist, intentionally to alienate those who approach anarchism as a fantasy role-playing game and to deliver a retrospective shock to the stunted maturity of the lazy imposters who think anarchy amounts to nothing more than avoiding work and attending the right parties. This collection will certainly seem like a be-

guiling artifact to the masses of idiots who slavishly conform to a succession of fashionable but increasingly inane academic passing whims, such as retarding new forms of Marxist dogmatism and lunatic varieties of Feminism and postmodernism—and in the process cheapen any value anarchism might have once had. I foresee nothing but shrill hysteria from PC whiners of all stripes (with their preprogrammed, humorless and knee-jerk responses to everything), whose comfort zone will be shattered by Labadie's willingness to face unpleasant facts, speak ugly truths, and take morbid pleasure in doing so. The pathetic remains of the authoritarian left will predictably denounce Labadie as a hopelessly bourgeois fossil and call for his suppression, while the sadly omnipresent closet-communists within anarchism's own ranks will (inaccurately) stigmatize Labadie as a capitalist and remain deaf, dumb and blind to his healthy holocaust of idols. Doctrinaire anarcho-primitivists will be aghast at Labadie's advocacy of "progress" and technological/industrial development and will find nothing of value here (being myopically unable to separate his vivid elucidations of individual freedom from his more outmoded postulations on linear social advancement), while collectivists will be completely out of their depth when challenged with Labadie's principle of "disassociation" as the key to social harmony. Many of anarchism's other codified sects won't find Labadie "revolutionary" or "insurrectionary" enough for their tastes and the impelling force of his uncompromising pessimism will be beyond their idealistic limits of permissible dissent. And as for the lost, neurotic souls who wander into the anarchist ghetto looking for the comfort and ease of ready-made articles of belief and prefabricated sets of opinions, well, their eyes will probably pop out of their heads at the thoughts that Labadie

dares put in print, almost as a sacrilegious act. In short, this book will please virtually no one, which is precisely why I submitted the manuscript to LBC Books, one of the few anarchist publishers in the US who are always eager to stir the pot. LBC Books exists to *foster* rather than suppress debate and the only firm criterion for inclusion in their catalogue seems to be a noticeable degree of independent thinking and a sincere interest in developing the Beautiful Idea. Their published titles display an eclecticism that takes advantage of all *relevant* traditions within anarchist thought, but even by LBC's adventurous standards this book is going to represent a serious rupture with today's anarchist *Zeitgeist*. In a way, this collection is an invitation to appraise not just Labadie, but anarchism in the United States as a whole; an opportunity to look at why we're marching around in circles to the beat of standard tunes and accomplishing very little—and to consider the deviant perspective of a anti-statist thinker who was considered eccentric and “crack-pot” in his lifetime, but who might be able to help us view our shared predicament with fresh eyes.

For over forty years the shit-stirring Labadie did stormy battle with socialists, communist anarchists, single taxers, leftists, Gesellites (explained later), social creditors, minarchists, and a host of other irritating human lice and invariably came out the victor. However, it should be noted that he rarely received thanks for his efforts—and in fact was usually spit upon and belittled as a killjoy and a crank (Labadie was the first to admit that he was a “cantankerous old man” but expressed that he would still dearly love to see his villifiers come out with some old-time “reasoned thought”!). A misfit even among anarchists, Labadie vomited forth four decades worth of stripped-down editorial commentary



where sarcastic jeering, cataclysmic foreboding, and human civilization laid-to-waste seemed to be the main currency. By the mid-1960's, he'd refined his literary and analytic technique into something impressively spine-chilling and acidic—and these were the trenchant, hopeless writings that I wanted to help make visible and available for foraging again. One doesn't read Labadie for his humanistic compassion, utopian platitudes, or vapid cheerleading, nor does one read him expecting to come upon an advanced level of ecological awareness (this appeared several generations later among anarchists); One reads Labadie for his ability to strip any topic of its solemnity (approaching it not as a weighty matter, but as a farce) and for his moments of caustic illumination. His writings inhabit a more "awakened frontier" of anarchist thought, one which flourishes on the edges of anarchism and not in its so-called "canonical" texts (which usually have the effect of restricting and narrowing discussions of anarchy). These disquieting considerations of the unenviable human condition are some of the few remnants of an otherwise lost-aspect of anarchism's literary and print heritage and belong to that category of texts which, in the words of anarchist historian Shaun Wilbur, "suggest whole universes of oppositional thought that are not easily accounted for in our schematic understandings of radical history". What's remarkable is how pertinent Labadie's shocking, unadorned and disgusted tirades are to current events, and how they all still seethe with an uncanny sense of timelessness without seeming in any way hackneyed.

Figures like Labadie, along with Joseph Dejacque, Ernest Coeurderoy, Zo d'Axa and a handful of other *outsiders*, pose a problem for entrenched doctrinal versions of anarchism, as their philosophical musings are relatively unencumbered by orthodoxy or

infantile presuppositions and are instead the products of minds unclouded by popular opinions (or, as in Labadie and Zo d'Axa's case, their ideas aren't poisoned by an **optimistic ontology**). This makes them the elephants in the parlor of academic, centrist anarchism and its attempts at social framing (meaning the collective and institutional processes that shape knowledge by authoritatively defining what is worth reading and *how* to read it), for they provide no cheap, schmaltzy answers regarding anarchy, but rather present a more radical posing of the question and a strenuous, ever-widening exploration of it. Probably no one who has encountered Laurance Labadie's trance-breaking, untimely meditations easily forgets him. Now a new generation needs an introduction....

## Biographical Introduction

Mark A. Sullivan

Laurance Labadie, born on June 4, 1898, was the youngest child of Jo Labadie, the famed "gentle anarchist" of Detroit. Jo, in addition to providing an individualistic anarchist influence in the labor emancipation movement, published little books and leaflets of his own essays and verses written in the language of the working person of the day. Laurance, or "Larry" as he came to be called, picked up the craft from his father who never forced his own profession or beliefs on his children. As he matured, the youngest Labadie investigated the philosophies and ideologies of his time and found wanting all but one: anarchism, the denial of all human and "divine" authority over the individual person.

Like his father, Larry corresponded with and was heavily influenced by Benjamin R. Tucker, then

living in retirement in Europe. Like the one-time editor of *Liberty*, the leading journal of “Philosophical Anarchism” during the turn of the nineteenth century, young Labadie adopted a style of critical commentary which is especially revealed in his personal letters and in his one-man effort in the late 1930s: *Discussion: A Journal for Free Spirits*. Therein he attempted to engage his subscribers in dialogue and debate in which, as Tucker often said, the victor was the one who gained the most light. Lurance tilted with liberal reformers, conservative capitalists, limited-statists, and utopian communists on the social and political issues of those depression years, always stressing maximum liberty for every individual as a necessary prerequisite for true social progress.

Larry argued the necessity of private property to freedom of action. He was quick to point out that the capitalistic incomes of interest, rent, and profit were due to government restrictions on the issuance of private currency, on the appropriation of unoccupied land for use, on the free exchange with subjects of other states, and on free access to the abstract ideas of authors and inventors (*not* free access to tangible books and inventions which as commodities would command prices limited by competition to the actual costs of production and distribution, ending monopolistic profit). Under such competitive conditions it would be those who did the actual producing who would own the land and supply credit and currency, insuring a full return to their efforts having abolished interest and rent, which can only exist by grace of the State. In addition to *Discussion*, Larry reprinted such anarchist classics as Tucker’s “Attitude of Anarchism Toward Industrial Combinations” and John Badcock Jr.’s “Slaves to Duty,” a condensed exposition of the egoistic philosophy of Max Stirner—demolishing the myth of moral imperatives. Like Tucker, Labadie took this stance of utilitarian individualism in his

advocacy of anarchism, rather than the natural law theory advanced by Lysander Spooner in the 1880s. Norms of liberty could only result from mutual agreement; they did not emanate from a deified nature, so Stirner and Labadie, after him, argued.

Other influences on Larry's thought included Josiah Warren, whose "sovereignty of the individual at his own cost" became Larry's guiding principle. It was, however, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon who received the greatest amount of Labadie's interest. It was from this mid-nineteenth century intellect that Larry came to see society as a complex configuration of contradictions. The dynamic, creative, and balanced interaction of these contradictions can only come about in a pluralistic society *lacking* any compulsory, overseeing authority which would only be used by one interest-group against the others (as is the condition in all democracies—a dictatorship being the case when one group has successfully suppressed the others). In this context, the meaning of Proudhon's "Property is theft!" became evident for Larry. It was the property and income granted by governments to the land and money lords via special privilege which constituted a conspiracy by one class to exploit the other. This perspective informed the sociologist Franz Oppenheimer, who distinguished between the "economic" and the "political" means of gaining wealth. The State is the institutionalization of theft by the ruling class in the name of Property. This view of the state is presented in its most economic form in a few short paragraphs which go to the heart of the matter in Larry's essay "What Is Man's Destiny?" In this essay we are presented with the prospect of humankind utterly failing to achieve any semblance of real freedom from state oppression, succumbing to inevitable annihilation. In modern societies the ingrained and *institutionalized* habits of domination and submission are

self-perpetuating. While the West and the East are coming to resemble each other in their monotony, they have the capacity to destroy all intelligent(?) life on the planet. As Tucker conceded on the eve of World War II, "The Monster, Mechanism, is devouring mankind."

It is not surprising that the developments of the twentieth century turned active libertarians into resigned pessimists. This was the case with anyone who actually perceived the magnitude of the erosion of individual liberty. Unlike Benjamin R. Tucker and Albert Jay Nock, this pessimism did not silence Lorraine Labadie. Instead, it became food for more independent thinking and much writing. While he did not abandon the economics of Proudhon's Mutualism, Larry concentrated more and more on the matters of war and peace: the reasons behind the Vietnam conflict and the forces leading to what he saw as a final confrontation between the US and the USSR. Whether or not such a climax will occur is perhaps more doubtful given that the "leaders" of these two powers, along with those of the "People's Republic", seem to have discovered that they have more interests in common with each other than with those they supposedly represent. As the rationale of the State is the perpetuation of Privilege, it would be self-defeating to put itself in the danger of losing *all* sources of economic exploitation. Larry was one who would not concede such far-sightedness to the politicians, and so he saw only a blind descent into destruction.

Throughout his adult life, Labadie was associated with the decentralist School of Living of Ralph Borsodi and Mildred J. Loomis, who remained a life-long friend.

Although he had certain differences with the approach taken by many of the decentralists, he found more receptive minds in that movement than

in the embryonic anarcho-capitalist movement of the early sixties, which he criticized for not being bold (or consistently anarchist) enough to attack the State supported land and money monopolies. In this regard he raised not-so-new issues; Proudhon debated Bastiat, and Tucker debated the Spence-rian individualists, over the issue of monetary interest long before Labadie criticized Murray Rothbard in the pages of the School of Living's journal *A Way Out*. Larry took much fuel for this debate from the early twentieth century economist Hugo Bilgram, whose *The Cause of Business Depressions* argued the viability of an interest-free currency and criticized the time-preference theory of interest developed by the Austrian economist Eugen von Bohm-Bawerk. Labadie, however, opposed any proposal to have such a monetary reform carried out by government. Larry maintained that free competition in the service of supplying sound currency and credit would drive interest rates to a minimum; and in such circumstances the *good* money would drive out the bad, thus reversing "Gresham's Law".

It was *A Way Out* that brought Labadie's thought to the attention of a wider readership. Over the years, however, Larry had been in contact with and/or influenced several radical libertarian thinkers. Members of this group included (to name a few) censorship critic Theodore Schroeder, revisionist historian James J. Martin—author of *Men Against the State*—evolutionary psychologist Don Werkheiser, and Robert Anton Wilson—co-author of the "anarcho-absurdist" satire on conspiracy theory, *Illuminatus!*

Those who knew Larry loved him; and he enjoyed, especially, matching wits with his friends in serious or whimsical dialogue. His conversations were often punctuated with biting satire or didactic mime, giving the appearance of a cross between court jester and venerable sage. Living in one of the

small stone cabins built by homesteaders for the original School of Living in Suffern, N.Y., the small-framed Larry reminded one of a hermit hobbit. He was fond of the words of Schopenhauer, "the person who did not cherish solitude did not love liberty." Laurance Labadie loved liberty and cherished solitude. He never married, providing for his needs as a superb handyman with an inventive and problem-solving mind. Larry never submitted voluntarily to a doctor's care, which profession he regarded as having a symbiotic dependence upon the diseases it purported to cure. His last year of life was a battle against the pain that racked his body; he died on August 12, 1975, having been cared for by Mrs. Ficker, his long-time friend and neighbor. Larry left behind one niece, Carlotta Anderson, her family, and a few friends old and new who will never forget him. His extensive library of anarchist books, periodicals, writings, and personal letters have been given to the Labadie Collection which was initiated by his father at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and which is the largest collection of such literature in this hemisphere.

"What Is Man's Destiny?" was the last piece Larry wrote for publication. It appeared in the fourth quarter issue of *The Journal of Human Relations*, published at Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio; the editor at the time was Don Werkheiser. That state universities would house anarchist literature and publish a journal advocating "Better Life in Larger Liberty" leaves one to wonder: anarchist subversion? Perhaps such anarchistic phenomena reveal the System to be not quite as impenetrable as Larry surmised. Indeed, it was such curious contradictions in the structure of our authoritarian society that the free spirit of Laurance Labadie took a melancholy delight in discovering and exposing.

## ***We Never Called Him "Larry": A Reminiscence of Laurance Labadie***

James J. Martin

The death of Laurance Labadie on August 12, 1975, in his 78th year, removed from the scene the last direct link to Benjamin R. Tucker, and amounted to the virtual closure and the last episode in the socio-economic impulse that became known in the early decades of the 20th century as "Mutualism." This blending of the ideas of Josiah Warren, P. J. Proudhon, William B. Greene, and Tucker, along with peripheral contributions from Stephen Pearl Andrews, Ezra Heywood, and additional embellishments of others less well known, was succinctly elucidated in the 1927 Vanguard editions *What Is Mutualism?* and in *Proudhon's Solution of the Social Problem*, by Clarence Lee Swartz and Henry Cohen, respectively. From the early 1930s Laurance Labadie was the most polished exponent of this ideological tradition, his articulateness being commended by Tucker himself, in a dedication to a photograph he presented to Laurance dated September 6, 1936.

Laurance was born in Detroit on June 4, 1898. His father was Joseph A. Labadie, a celebrated figure in Detroit labor and radical activities, an almost life-long associate of Tucker, and founder of the famed collection of printed and manuscript materials which has been housed in the Library of the University of Michigan under his name for over two generations. The family descended from mixed French and Indian stock which had settled in the Great Lakes region since the 17th century penetration of the area by the famed *trappeurs* and *coureurs de bois*. The Indian blood in the family undoubtedly



had become extremely attenuated by Laurance's time, but it was part of his ancestry which he continually referred to with pride, and undoubtedly romanticized, while doing so. However, I remember spending time on several occasions examining thick albums of ancient photographs of the family, noting the reappearance generation after generation of short, stocky men, some with rather pronounced Indian physiognomy. In any case, Laurance was proud of both these ancestral strains, probably emphasized to him as time passed because he was the last of the line and sole survivor bearing the Labadie name. His only living relative is a married niece, daughter of one of his two sisters.

Laurance was the most unusual self-taught and intellectually self-disciplined person I have ever met. He learned to think and write over a long period of lonely years, perfecting his style and skills in solitary study. His teachers via literature were Tucker and the galaxy of writers in Tucker's journal, *Liberty* (1881-1908), Proudhon, Warren, and a substantial coterie of obscure and mainly unpublished controversialists with whom he corresponded on politico-economic themes for 40 years. But Tucker was his primary model, and he compared favorably to Tucker in clarity of expression several times.

Laurance as a letter-writer developed the most fiercely logical and precise style I have ever read, with an exceptional economy of words and absence of extraneous padding. But this characterized his other writing as well, a lengthy string of essays, very few of which were ever published. As he observed to me in his letter of May 28, 1948, "Clear and simple writing is the most difficult, if only for the reason that clear and simple thinking is so rare, and bluff-

ing via nebulousness so easy.” A related remark, which I heard from him several times, was, “When you get in deeper water you use bigger words.”

The singular thing about Laurance was that he was not a professional writer or an academically-trained intellectual; his formal education had barely taken him into high school, from which he thought he had providentially escaped. Unrelated even remotely to the pedagogical world of talk and print, he was essentially a skilled worker, one of the very first rank of tool makers in Detroit for years, with an accumulation of related skills that gained him the reputation of prime craftsmanship in anything he undertook. To appreciate the quality and excellence of his work one must take into consideration some of the difficulties under which men worked in the 1920s and early 1930s, before the electronic revolution, when men eyeballed tolerances of a ten thousandth of an inch. Among his talents were all the building trades: the rebuilding of much of the property he occupied for 25 years at Suffern, N.Y. (about which more later) demonstrated that. His shop on these premises was a model of compact, logical organization, even after he had become very careless about his personal affairs and habits. Here he preserved some examples of his tool-making prowess, which can only be described as exquisite.

In addition to all this, Laurance learned to set type and to operate a small job press, inherited from his father, which the latter had used for several decades in printing his own literary achievements, including a great deal of verse, issued sometimes in remarkable little editions often printed on the reverse side of wallpaper. This tradition of self-publication Laurance carried on for years, and a stream

of small works issued from the basement of 2306 Buchanan Street, Detroit painstakingly set from fonts of tiny type by hand, locked up and run off on the small printing press. In the course of becoming acquainted with his father's library, that part of it which had not been dispatched to Ann Arbor, Laurance not only learned writing style and his father's artistic achievements as a printer and publisher, but served as a preserver of several of the signal works of the individualist-anarchist tradition going back to the early 19th century; his editions of Tucker and John Badcock were especially praiseworthy.

But all this was what Laurance Labadie did in his spare time. He joined the labor force during the First World War, and began a substantial stint in the automotive industry with a job at the old Continental Motors out on East Jefferson Avenue in Detroit in 1918. He subsequently worked as well for Studebaker, Ford, and Chevrolet, in the latter becoming part of the team of advanced experimental mechanical specialists who worked closely with the designers, during the early 1920s. But Laurance changed jobs frequently, and tolerated little stupidity from foremen or other superiors. It was ironic that though he spent so many years working in the automotive industry, he never learned how to drive a car. (It was believed that Benjamin Tucker never even *rode* in one.) Laurance worked in a number of shops during the Second World War, saved his money, and thereafter was never again employed in work involving his primary competence. Much of my personal contact with him occurred in the following five years, during which time I was pursuing graduate degrees or teaching at the University of Michigan.

The first time I met Laurance, he came out to

Ann Arbor on a bus, and we conversed for a goodly span of time in the south cafeteria of the Michigan Union, where most of our conversations in the late 1940s took place. He liked the environment, with its semi-darkness and its massive oak tables carved with the initials of generations of students, and radiating a rather formidable atmosphere of respect for tradition. Here one rarely was heard to raise his voice, and there were days when there was more genuine intellectual traffic at its tables than in the University's combined classrooms. Laurance loved coffee, and occasionally talked about another coffee-lover, John Basil Barnhill--editor of a famous journal of the Tucker era, *The Eagle and the Serpent*. (Henry Meulen, the editor in London of *The Individualist*, probably the only organ in the world advocating monetary ideas close to those of the Proudhon-Tucker-Labadie sort, once told a story of losing touch with Barnhill after years of contact, and then getting a cryptic postcard from him, from a Detroit hospital, which simply said, "Dear Meulen: coffee is the devil. Yours, Barnhill.")

Laurance had been alerted about me by Agnes Inglis, the curator of the collection of materials housed in the general library on campus which bore the name of Laurance's father. My sustained borrowing and endless questions apparently indicated that I was serious about it all, though Laurance was somewhat wary on our first contact, long acquainted with dilettantes whose principal characteristic was the ability to ruin a good topic or subject. It did not take long to convince him I was not fooling around and thenceforth we met regularly, in "the Collection," as we called it, in the Union, and on occasion at his home in Detroit on Buchanan Street.

Laurance's personal library was formidable, duplicating many things in the depository in Ann Arbor, but made more remarkable by his impressive correspondence files. Even at meals we "worked," I doing the cooking while Laurance read to me from copies of his letters to such as Henry Cohen, Gold O'Bay or E. C. Riegel and many others who became embroiled in the seemingly interminable matching, especially of monetary ideas. It was this correspondence which first made me appreciate his fierce pursuit of logic and improved expression, which resulted in more clear thinking and straight writing than I have encountered from anyone else but Tucker over the years.

But we inevitably gravitated to "the Collection," as most people who knew of it usually referred to it. The mark of Laurance's father "Jo" was all over it, but it had grown enormously in the more than four decades since its creation, mainly as a consequence of the tireless labors and around-the-clock devotion of Agnes Inglis, its curator until her death in 1952.

Laurance and Agnes were the first and virtually the only enthusiastic supporters I found for the writing project which eventually appeared as *Men Against the State*, in the five years between the completion of its first draft and its first publication. Laurance read it all for the first time in the late spring of 1949, and wrote me on June 26 of that year: "I doubt whether anyone will ever do a better job on the subject you've tackled."

Agnes was so obviously a partisan of the manuscript that it made me self-conscious, but it was a vast boost to have such unqualified support from people who knew so much about the subject as these two, and who personally knew and had known sev-

eral of those figuring in the study. It provided at times a kind of eerie feeling of having been involved personally from the start as well, a feeling which was much expanded after a research residence of several weeks in New Harmony, Indiana, and another later on a Brentwood, Long Island.

Laurance had seen parts of the first three chapters dealing with Josiah Warren in 1947, and we spent some time in correspondence and conversation about Warren's ideas and activities. He remarked that after I had reported on my findings at New Harmony he had learned more about Warren from me than I had learned from him, but I was inclined to believe that it all about evened out. And contributing to our discussions when they occurred in "the Collection" was Agnes, who responded with the radiant energy of a teenager to our ongoing reconstruction of this long-neglected story.

I guess Laurance and I both loved "Aggie"--as we sometimes called her (but in our own company only. When people started calling Laurance "Larry" I do not know, but it was after he had left Michigan. Agnes never referred to him at any time in any way except "Laurance," and everyone I ever met who knew him in the 1940s in Michigan did the same. Though his father had been known to nearly all by the affectional "Jo," addressing his son as "Larry" always struck me as similar to calling Tucker "Ben-ny.") but as to Agnes, both of us in our own personal, introverted, repressed, and unexpressed ways, showed our affection through deeds instead of words. I guess there was nothing either of us would not have done for her, but she was not an easy person to do things *for*. It took her nearly eight years to call me by the familiar name used by all my

associates, and no matter how informal things got, there was always a part of her kept in reserve. Lorraine had known her for many years before I made her acquaintance in 1943.

We occasionally went to lunch together in the Michigan League, and if the steps of the main library were icy, she would allow us to take her arm, but only until we had passed the treacherous spots; to do otherwise would have been an indication that she was no longer independent and capable of taking care of herself, even when approaching 80. That was important to her. I can remember a considerable succession of Sunday night vegetarian collations in her apartment near the U-M campus, listening to her recall ancient and exciting days, and her personal recollections of Emma Goldman, Hippolyte Havel, John Beverly Robinson and many others, among a formidable 'mist procession' of related notables; active in radical circles since World War I, she *knew* more people in that world than most others even *read* about. (The meal was almost always the same: a spread of cold cooked vegetables, especially lots of carrots, hard-boiled eggs, and a dessert of dark wheat bread toast and cherry jam, and tea. I used to spoof her mildly about her vegetarian convictions against killing animals to eat, and she acknowledged that she did break ranks by wearing leather shoes. Had she lived into the plastic revolution she might have been able to eschew even leather footwear and enjoy the last laugh on me. But she was adamant in her refusal to bless any political system for the same reason she enjoined killing animals for food: she was against any and all political solutions achieved by murder, even if such a goal was to be achieved by *just one* murder.)

In a letter she wrote on the evening of October 28, 1951, she remarked, "I'm 81--nearly--and frail and don't work as I have worked, but it makes everything all right. My life is full." By that time Laurance had relocated at Suffern and I was in northern Illinois. We never had another gathering in Ann Arbor; Agnes Inglis died there January 29, 1952.

An intellectual relationship with Laurance Labadie was an education in itself. Conversationally or via correspondence, he would eat you alive at the faintest sign of wavering of intelligence. The injunction against tolerating fools was something he took very seriously. One of the surest cures for an attack of the stupids, many found out, was a tangle with Laurance. As a writer, his unpretentious, stripped-down, to-the-point style (which Tucker probably would have been delighted to print in *Liberty* decades before), was not maimed by academic bafflegab and the waffling resulting from the fence-straddling paralysis induced by the bogus "objectivity" disease of 'hire' education, contracted from training in the sophisticated concealment of opinions behind the technical disguise of simulated aloofness or disengagement.

Laurance had always developed his economic and politico-social ideas uncluttered with theological constructs such as "natural rights," "natural law," "objective morality," and the like, a large part of these and related ideas stemming from a power position occupied by their exponents, and utterly unamenable to any kind of proof, as is the case with all religious assertions, a circumstance which accounts for the interminable arguing which all such positions encourage, and for the never-ending contumaciousness which always attends the contentions that result. (If a case for a rational and equitable libertarian



society cannot be structured without recourse to religious props, then the field might just as well be abandoned to the irrationalists and it be admitted that a world ungoverned by spooks is an utter impossibility. The polemics of economics are drenched in theological postures; the earnest exposures of one another's "errors" is done in language reminiscent of religious broadsides of the early 17th century, and fanciful theses concerning likely economic behavior in the future or in defense of systems which have never seen the light of day nor are likely ever to do so are advocated with a heat comparable to that which attended the controversies of early Christianity over the nature of Transsubstantiation.)

Of all the areas of economic theory, Lorraine preferred to expand upon money. After Warren, and especially Proudhon and Tucker, he respected only two modern money theorists, Hugo Bilgram and E. C. Riegel. Bilgram's *The Cause of Business Depressions* (New York: 1913, reprinted, Bombay, India, 1950) and Riegel's *Free Enterprise Money* (New York, 1944) were the only works he ever recommended to me to read. He knew Riegel personally and thought him the best after Bilgram; nevertheless he and Riegel engaged in sustained correspondence over points in the latter's book which were considered unclear.

In actuality, the entire individualist anti-statist position from Warren and Proudhon to the present is inextricably tied into the insistence on the necessity of competing money systems and the evolution of marketplace control over money, credit and interest rates. It is still too strong medicine for most 'libertarians,' who persist in dogged devotion to the gold standard, which is essentially a formula for a

different brand of State-controlled money, run in collusion between sly State finance ministers and the major holders of gold, tying currency to a gold price fixed by agreement, and made invulnerable to the free trade in gold and consequent frequent periodic adjustments in the light of changing gold prices, by force. That this results in a money system not much different in total effect from existing fiat money systems is obvious.

I listened to many of Laurance's monologues on money theory, some of them even for some time on the telephone, only contributing my approach at the end, which was usually expressed in the simple declaration that "Money is something that will buy something," for which I was reproached for neglecting the function of money as a "store of value" and concentrating only on its function as a "medium of exchange." But he admitted that mine was surely the concern of the overwhelming majority of the people of the world.

Perhaps I became too much of a 'Stirnerite' for Laurance. He never came to terms with Tucker's abandonment of economic and financial analysis for Stirner, and mainly tried to treat the situation as one in which Tucker's views and enthusiasms between 1881 and 1901 were all that one needed to go on. My similar waning interest in economic and money theory changed much of the nature of our communications as I gradually moved to the Pacific Coast for a decade and Laurance settled on the Atlantic. There were times when the distance separating us resulted in sustained periods of silence from both ends. In 1951 and again in 1956 I spent from late spring to early fall in nine European countries. During the first of these Laurance was laboring

mightily to bring the Borsodi property, the old School of Living of the 1930s, in Suffern, into the kind of shape he wanted it to be in. I wrote him on my return, remarking that we were getting to be rather irregular correspondents. In his hasty undated reply he commented, "Yes, we've been paying about as much attention to each other as couple of brothers," while concluding, "Please tell me something about your jaunt around Urup." On the other hand there were occasions when something of mutual interest touched off a stream of dispatches back and forth. Though our personal meetings ended our other contacts made things seem as though we had never parted ways, and our more substantial exchanges concerned more the larger issues and the general circumstances attending what might be called "man's lot."

This had to be, because I was convinced that wrangling over theoretical economics was a wearisome futility, and that the ideas of economists were like those of evangelists: unprovable; one either believed them or one did not. My own experiences as a 'businessman' in the latter half of the '60s indicated to me that such things as prices were mainly psychological and a reflection more of the warfare of wills among buyers and sellers than they were of 'supply and demand' factors and production costs, frequently plucked out of thin air on an experimental basis, and sometimes arbitrarily *raised*, not lowered, when the product did not sell. The subject of money was similarly to be understood through psychological explanation rather than through the turning over of the tenets of theorists. Something with no intrinsic value at all was functioning as the monetary basis of the largest part of the world's sur-

face, including the USA, simply because it was acceptable to the great majority through whose hands it passed, and in full knowledge that it had no 'redeemable' content or quality. I am still waiting for a credible explanation of why a worthless material may serve as the medium of exchange among hundreds of millions for many scores of years, such a circumstance being basically uninfluenced by the hostile bellows of its critics. (The volume of literature and talk pouring out in denunciation of the money system is absolutely paralyzing in its enormity, yet this unbelievable industry amounts to little that is perceptible in the form of change; the multitudes go on exchanging goods and services for this money with barely a murmur, the whole tableau made a little humorous by the eagerness of the denouncers of the "worthless paper" to accept large amounts of it for things they have for sale, ranging from scarce substances like gold to newsletters informing the buyers that the money they use is "no good." This kind of analysis makes sophisticates smile, but they in turn are still trying to tell us how an economy functions like the man trying to explain how a gun operates by pointing to the smoke emerging from the end of the barrel after it has been fired.)

When it came to ruminations concerning the 'big picture,' we got on somewhat better, particularly in the decade of the '60s. A matter which we occasionally dwelled upon, but on which Laurance did not write other than peripherally and indirectly, was the zero record of any government solving unemployment and inflation simultaneously. Economic history did not reveal, so far as either of us could recall, a case where these two situations had ever

been tackled at the same time and successfully solved; they were always taken on *seriatim*, and reversed when palliatives to relieve one of them exacerbated the other, requiring a turnaround of attention, and vice versa. In the 20th century there had been only emergency authoritarian regimes which had grappled with both problems at once, though the apparent degree of success had really resulted in only cosmetic solutions, producing *repressed* inflation and *repressed* unemployment via various degrees of massive governmental intervention; **it was only war which seemed to come to the rescue.**

Few people were more aware than Laurance that *private* enterprise and *free* enterprise are anything but synonyms, which Tucker had also discussed in different terminology and under different circumstances. As for the more recent period, for nearly sixty years an army of professional anti-communists had posed the problem in Persian opposites of capitalist children of light and communist demons of darkness. But in the late 1960s they suddenly discovered that Big Industry, Big Finance, Big Commerce, and Big Agriculture (the latter controlled by the other three) got along famously with Big Communism, and that there were more unions and union members hostile to communism than there were among the opulent and the plutocratic. Then there began the serious investigation of global collusion among them, and the attention to the Bilderbergers and the Trilateral Commission, and related international string-pullers. Laurance's analysis cut through to the core of the affair well before any of the eloquent mouthpieces of the Right or Left intellectual establishment stumbled across the situation, and elaborated their topical version.

There was one matter to which we returned many times, one which had nothing to do with current affairs, world politics and national programs. This was the train of thought loosed in a celebrated book titled *Might Is Right, or the Survival of the Fittest*, first published in 1898 under a pseudonym, "Ragnar Redbeard," whom no one has ever identified with any certitude. It is surely one of the most incendiary works ever to be published anywhere, and was subsequently reprinted in England in 1910, and two more times in the USA, in 1927 and as recently as 1972. Laurance gave me several copies of this over the years, including a hardbound copy which contained his marginal comments growing out of our various discussions, in his tiny and precise handwriting, almost all in red ink. In the late '40s we drifted to this work and its various theses on several occasions, and repeatedly thereafter.

One issue which especially aroused our speculations grew out of "Redbeard"'s undeviating preoccupation with physical force as the constant for resolving all important issues, including survival. But it did not appear to Laurance and myself that history unqualifiedly supported this view. Throughout time there have appeared numerous folk who had managed to survive, many for very long periods, employing a totally different range of 'survival values.' These stratagems eschewed weaponry and musculature, consisting of cunning, treachery, mendacity, pettifoggery, chicanery, betrayal, misrepresentation, deception, insincerity and fulsome flattery which had marked the numerous levels of hangers-on and other parasites and related courtiers of every tyranny, long-lived or otherwise, which stretched out over the millennia. However, we both

concluded that “Redbeard” had surely undermined the largest part of the rationale to which conventional society appeared to be anchored.

Though it was a rare incident of mutual concern which did not involve reference to historical materials, Laurance was not very enthusiastic about my involvement in teaching the subject. I agreed with him that much of what was memorialized about the past involved a vast contingent of rogues. And, when we were in a speculative mood on a galactic scale, I conceded that the affairs of the species through much of recordkeeping reflected too much concern for the deeds of the endless round of liars, thieves and murderers to which the world had been subjected across the millennia. In his sustained and deepening gloom concerning affairs domestic and foreign he found my willingness to take part in the world at least on a limited basis, simply for the fun of watching the whole loony show, as something akin to the efforts of a cheerful village idiot, diligently tending a radish garden on the lip of an active volcano.

The content of Laurance Labadie’s literary labors changed considerably beginning in the early ‘50s and extending on for about a decade. He began to examine broader topics and confront far larger issues than those of micro-economics, which had absorbed his energies for so many of the early years of his intellectual development. The principal reason for this abrupt change in the emphasis of his work was his early postwar involvement in the affairs and interests of the *decentralist* impulse, sparked by Ralph Borsodi and especially by his principal lieutenant, Mildred Jensen Loomis, a dynamic and articulate activist whose incredible energy in advancing its ideas and programs was easily the most im-

portant factor in the spread of interest in this mode of life in the quarter of a century after the end of World War II.

Borsodi's famous blast at the growing nightmare of urban industrialism, *This Ugly Civilization* (1929), occurred at a time before any of the later trendy and fashionable environmentalists and ecologists were even born. And his withdrawal and experimentation with a rational, logical and scientific subsistence homestead as an alternate way of life he documented in another book, *Flight From the City* (1933), another most premature work, which was to be an inspiration for many who were to take belated steps in his direction.

Beginning in 1946 the Borsodi-Loomis efforts began to take shape as the vanguard of a "movement", and their ideas, activities and achievements were broadcast in a series of periodicals, such as *The Interpreter*, *Balanced Living*, and later *A Way Out*. Mrs. Loomis recognized the historical continuity of the ideas dating back to Warren, Spooner, and Tucker which Laurance was mainly responsible for making known to her, and which her contemporaries were re-discovering, sometimes through just practical encounters in the everyday world. But this aspect gave to the homesteading movement an ideological base of a kind, which was incorporated into an already large body of other ideas derived from Borsodi and others. The result was that some issues of the School of Living periodicals were remarkable reading experiences, in those days thirty years ago when it seemed as though the welfare-warfare State had become all that Americans might ever know.

A related but independent influence upon



Laurance at about the same time as his contacts with the School of Living decentralists took place was the psychologist Theodore Schroeder. He spent considerable time with Schroeder at the latter's residence in Connecticut, and wrote me repeatedly concerning the subjects they discussed. It became obvious to me that Laurance increasingly appreciated some of Schroeder's views, and traces of them show up in essays written after 1950.

Laurance Labadie's extended relations with the School of Living is really a separate and necessarily far longer topic than can be taken up here. It is brought into this phase of the discussion here because it had a significant effect on what he was to write thereafter, and especially because many of his best essays were produced in that period. That Laurance bought the original Borsodi School of Living property in Suffern and moved there to live in 1950 seemed to have some symbolic significance, though he never tried to do there what the Borsodi family had done fifteen to twenty years earlier. (Borsodi later was to go to India for an extended stay spreading the message of his version of decentralized living.) But the periodicals edited by Mrs. Loomis were Laurance's major opening to an audience larger than that consisting of his private mail associates such as myself, and his communications and a few of his shorter pieces were published there.

A dark and morose strain began to dominate Laurance's writing in the middle of 1960s, and his work appeared so grim that it made even most editors of radical journals flinch and run. Strangely enough, one of his steadiest supporters was the editor of the *Indian Libertarian*, in Bombay, Arya Bhavan, who printed a succession of Laurance's pieces,

though they necessarily had only a tiny exposure in America. The only attempts to print several of Laurance's essays at one time were made in 1966 and 1967 in *A Way Out* in special issues edited by Herbert C. Roseman, a young latecomer to the school who esteemed Laurance's mode of literary expression.

Actually, Laurance and I had discussed a possible edition of a collection of things which he thought had been ably done shortly after the Libertarian Book Club published my edition of Paul Eltzbacher's *Anarchism* in 1960. But his reaction to this suggestion was so bleakly negative then, and for some time thereafter, that it led me to abandon the project, and work at different ones, among which were the first reprinting of Max Stirner's *The Ego and His Own* in almost 60 years, the first reprinting of Spooner's *No Treason* in a century, and a combined French and English edition of Etienne de La Boetie's *Discours de la Servitude volontaire* for the first time in 400 years.

It was in this latter series that I reprinted John Badcock's *Slaves to Duty* for the first time in a generation, using Laurance's famous basement-press *Samizdat* edition of 1938 (with minor corrections and a few annotations), and dedicating the edition to him. Shortly after that, in a letter on March 15, 1973, I once more proposed to him the issuance of a selection of his essays as a volume in this series. We talked about it by telephone and via correspondence for some weeks, and it was to bolt down the details, so to speak, that I flew out to see him at Suffern early in November of that year, the last time I saw him, though we spent some time on the telephone thereafter, following my return to Colorado.

It is commonplace in the issuance of collections

of that kind to accompany them with a send-off consisting of a learned disquisition on the galactic meaning of it all, an “in depth” probing of the author in virtually every dimension, and an attempt to tell the reader all about his thought processes and especially his secret ideological leanings, spelled out almost as if each contribution required hand-leading and spoon-feeding, lest the reader, if left entirely to his or her own resources, might emerge from the experience still wondering what was supposed to have been found. But that symposium had nothing pretentious in it to require such a puff. It is my conviction that Laurance Labadie, a self-taught workingman for most of his life, wrote directly enough to be understood by anyone with residual common sense and perhaps a dictionary, and the willingness to re-read what had not registered the first time around. Laurance remarked to me several times that he learned to write with great pain (usually while conveying a mixture of chiding and admiration aroused by what he alleged was my “effortless ability” to express myself); anyone who finds him hard going owes him an extra one if only because of his difficult journey from such a distant location. And the Boneless Wonders who long ago adopted a course based on Voltaire’s observation that language is a device for the concealment of thought might profit from an autodidact who never learned the ways of calculated obscurantism.

We live in a time of compounded hypocrisy of such scope and sophistication that not many seem able to apprehend the nature of it all, let alone possess or come by the intellectual tools necessary to penetrate even its outer layers. We hear from the loudest of our pacemakers what amounts to a con-

stant psychological warfare, though purporting to advocate with mind-numbing decibels ‘balance,’ ‘moderation,’ ‘intellectual and academic freedom,’ the ‘need to know,’ as well as many other civic virtues such as ‘the right to hear both sides’ and the like (few issues have just two sides, but the convention which is draped upon us all starts with this crippling assumption).

So in the interest of all this, assuming a residual degree of belief in the genuineness of these and other related near-platitudinous verbal reflexes, Laurance Labadie’s essays were presented as a contribution to the general illumination of the ideological community, as what a self-taught isolate, at great personal cost, thought of the world and some of its perennial concerns, as opposed to the mountain of polished evasion and cleverly phrased diversions, continuously added to by the multitude which ceaselessly emerges from the formal educational and idea-manufacturing sector, which bears official blessing and sanction as the proper basing point the remainder of us should use in confronting what Proudhon described as “the social problem.”

## Section 1



# The Depression Years

Chord

*Clarity, definiteness, and specificity are desirable for the enhancement of understanding. But anarchism as a social philosophy suffers under the handicap of not being an affirmative theory about the activities of humans. It is rather a negative philosophy in the sense that it tries to ascertain what is invasive of the maximum amount of liberty for each individual as such, and to proscribe such behavior. Moreover, anarchism contemplates and embraces the largest variety of individual and social behavior. And further, it is mutable, and pertains to change and development; it is a philosophy of movement as distinguished from a condition, a conception of society which is dynamic and "open" as distinguished from a static system of social relations—a **road** and not a **place**.*

*Unlike various forms of socialism or of **any** prescribed social order, anarchism cannot lay down positive specifications and duties for the individual to perform. Insofar as it does look upon society as an **organism**, it sees it as an organism of an especial nature, **discreet** rather than **concrete**, mutable, living, growing, changing, developing, and the very best it can do in the matter of specification is to provide the greatest latitude for varied individual action.*

*Anarchy is thus impossible to conceive as a **system** in the usual sense of this term, and perhaps its essential feature is that it denies the feasibility or legitimacy of fitting people to systems. It may be said that an anarchistic society will be composed of associations, but will not **be** an association or organization.*

—Laurance Labadie, 1939

Laurance Labadie was an extremely prolific writer in the 1930s and published the bulk of his known articles in Marcus Graham's legendary journal *Man!*

Marcus Graham (1893-1985) was a Rumanian immigrant who became active in the anarchist movement during the First World War. He contributed to several major anarchist publications (such as *Free Society*, edited by Hippolyte Havel) before becoming editor of *Man!* in January 1933 (which continued publishing, despite State harassment, until 1940 when it was finally suppressed by the US government). Essentially an anarcho-communist (and a proponent of propaganda by deed, including assassinations), Graham was broad-minded enough to regularly include individualist anarchist perspectives in *Man!* from contributors like Emile Armand and Labadie (Labadie even managed to talk him into republishing essays by the early American anarchist Josiah Warren). During the peak of US anarchism, Graham lived for a while at the Steton Colony, where Sam Dolgoff claims "He always went barefoot, ate raw food, mostly nuts and raisins, and refused to use a tractor, being opposed to machinery; and he didn't want to abuse horses, so he dug the earth himself." (*Anarchist Voices*, pg 423). According to some accounts he was a fruitarian, but his vocal propensity for anti-political violence led the authorities to hound him relentlessly throughout his radical career; efforts to deport him ultimately failed, however, because the government was unable to ascertain his country of origin (when Graham was arrested and threatened with deportation by the US government, he thwarted their efforts by discovering, through hard and exhaustive research, a small American town that burned down along with all its public records and claiming that he'd been born there). In a last desperate attempt to get rid of him the US government actually offered financial and political aid to Graham to enter any country of his choice... illegally if need be!

The intimidation of *Man!*'s printers by the forc-

es of law and order finally led to its demise, but Graham continued his activities as a revolutionary writer throughout his life, contributing to journals such as *L'Adunata de Refrattari*, *Resistance*, *The Match!*, *Black Flag* and *Anarchy* (as well as assembling the valuable compendium *An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry*) until he died in California in 1985.

A controversial and quarrelsome figure (Emma Goldman once called him a “poison in the movement”), endowed with a fiery temperament, Graham was supported mostly by Italian anarchists of the Galleanist school, who admired his militancy. Like Graham, Labadie was a fairly controversial personage himself, infamous for the delight he took in slaughtering sacred cows, and in this sense their “alliance” had some consistency to it. As his friend James J. Martin recalled after Laurance’s death:

*If there was one thing Laurance enjoyed more than anything else it was controversy, and if one did not occur he was forever inciting one in his impish way, though not for any malicious reason. Laurance luxuriated in his image of a curmudgeon, and spoke in a cryptic way occasionally of “putting on his act”. Anyone with a decent acquaintance with his correspondence will verify what I say about Laurance’s joy at being an **agent provocateur** in igniting an argument.*

Laurance also inherited a mimeograph machine in the mid- 1930’s from John Scott and Jo Ann Burbank, both teachers at the Stelton and Mohegan Modern Schools (Scott and Burbank had used the mimeograph machine to publish their journal *Mother Earth: A Libertarian Farm Paper Devoted to The Life of Thoreauvian Anarchy*, which appeared from 1933-1934). Labadie repaired the machine and used it to print his own modest, but contentious, paper *Discussion: A Journal For Free Spirits* (*Discussion* became an outlet for numerous radical writers, and some of Tucker’s original associates like Stephen T. Byington,



who were seeking a venue for their marginalized views; the journals format of active dialogue and debate through letter-writing created a ‘fraternal intimacy’ between editor and audience—a reader’s camaraderie based upon alienation from the established political dialogue of the ruling order). This mimeograph machine laid the keystone for Labadie’s life work: the publication of a long series of limited personal editions of various anarchist classics, executed with the finest typographical art, all of his own choice. All of these editions are masterpieces of aesthetic typography, produced with meticulous care and adorned with rich graphic material and woodcuts; the pamphlets Labadie issued included John Badcock’s timeless essay “Slaves To Duty,” as well as writings by other forgotten anarchists from America’s past like Voltairine DeCleyre, James L. Walker, John Beverely Robinson, Henry Appleton, and his own father, Joseph Labadie. He also raised from the dead some bona fide duds such as “The Attitude of Anarchism Toward Industrial Combinations,” a speech Benjamin Tucker had given before the National Civic Federation conference on trusts in Chicago in 1899! This ode to tedium confirms that economics is indeed “the dismal science”, but Labadie’s reissuing of it was ultimately a prelude to his long-term correspondence with the elderly Benjamin Tucker, as Labadie’s niece Carlotta Anderson explains in her book:

*Laurance, then thirty-five, sent a packet of the booklets to the seventy-nine-year-old Tucker in Monacco by way of introduction. Tucker pointed out the proofreading errors but otherwise seemed pleased. Over the next five years, Laurance wrote several adulatory letters to Tucker, describing himself as someone interested in the propagation of anarchism, ‘while not an enthusiast,’ although he considered Proudhon the greatest philosopher he had ever read. He observed that the individu-*

*alist school of anarchism seemed 'quite dead.' Tucker confirmed the observation by dedicating a photo presented to Laurance to 'the only young person that I recall who, being the offspring of an avowed Anarchist, finds his greatest satisfaction in continuing the battle, even though the cause be lost.'*

*Laurance confided to Tucker that, unlike his father, he was 'unsocial,' egocentric, irritable, and solitary, and that 'a despondent pessimism fastened on me about fifteen years ago, when I was immersed in Schopenhauer.' At the same time, he greatly understated to Tucker his commitment to the individualist doctrine. Laurance devoted the rest of his life to its promulgation. In 1933, the same year he originally contacted Tucker, he published an essay, 'Anarchism Applied to Economics,' the first of several hundred pieces he was to write in the next thirty-odd years. Originally concentrating on what he considered the evils resulting from the monopolization of money and banking, he went on to examine from the anarchist viewpoint education, racism, and religion—as well as issues unique to the twentieth century, such as the Vietnam conflict and the threat of nuclear war. Many of these sometimes brilliant expositions eventually found their way to obscure radical publications.*

Much of Labadie's writing from this period grappled with what he called altruism and paternalism (both ideological cloaks for ugly facts) and castigated the sheep-like proletariats who had become enervated addicts thirsting for funds from the magical fountain of the state-managed economy. As the last remaining torchbearer of an almost defunct tradition in the 1930's and 1940s, Labadie must have been a lonely man philosophically. Outside of his time, Labadie made no concessions to circumstanc-

es or contingencies and never vacillated in his individualist stand. In his opinion, communism and *anarcho*-communism were delusions and snares that disregarded the natural relation between effort and benefit and went against all the observed tendencies of humans by denying that self-interest is the paramount urge in life. What miracle, he asked repeatedly in his essays from the 1930's, will change the self-interest of the human animal to one of sacrifice? How is the approach from the self-interest existing at present to the "ideal" state of communism to be achieved? This is not to say that Labadie thought anarchy was possible without mutual aid, but he did consider it inherently problematic to base an entire philosophy on sentimentality and sympathy alone—and he bitterly resented how the term "anarchism" had been usurped and debased by the communists and syndicalists interlopers who had virtually "taken over" in his time.

*Selfishness. I concede that all men are selfish. But the term has not for me the same connotation as for you. To be selfish means to be under the urge of self-gratification. What is called altruism is usually but selfishness on a different level, done with the ability to take the long range view. An altruist is a man who believes he is his brother's keeper. An altruist is either a hypocrite or a fool. Nearly every form of tyranny has been perpetuated in the name of altruism. Every despot is an altruist. All politicians are altruists. And a world of altruists would be a world of meddlers. Oh, spare us from the altruists, for I do not worship spooks!*

—Laurance Labadie, 1937

With very few words, Labadie managed to make a powerful case against the nit-witted tendency, still all too common among professed anti-authoritarians, to

judge “revolutionary” policies by their intentions rather than their effects (dissecting every nuance of the disingenuous advertising and confusion on display in this worldview). The philanthropic or “humanitarian” impulse itself, he warned, usually becomes a far more pernicious form of power-mongering and *ressentiment*—and of the totalitarian desire for the satisfaction of acting as savior to the helpless masses (the inevitable embryonic model of the total state). From the French Reign of Terror to the communist Gulag, Labadie observed that there are few atrocities that don’t begin with noble motives, fanciful thinking and philanthropic abstractions, and he does a phenomenal job exposing the baloney of collectivist ideology and practice. Considering the tenor of that decade, Labadie showed a lot of moxie, especially with all the dingy and noisy apologists for the communist regime in Russia bumping their gums incessantly (the extermination of all those who resisted communist rule—including *anarchists*—was done by plan and intention and this statist butchery was commonly praised as “social engineering,” by radical admirers in America). Labadie’s on-target analysis of the lust for power of self-described humanitarians whose creed is the “collective good” will undoubtedly be brushed aside as reactionary by the post-Marxist and anti-state communist grifters that parasitize contemporary anarchist discourse (writing endless rhapsodies about “communization” and other theories of wilt while meandering into incredible imbecilities regarding invisible “coming insurrections” that are supported by nothing more substantial than a wish that they were true). This type of threadbare “thinking” has been a complete fiasco for anarchism and should be sloughed off as a snake

sheds last year's skin. Now readers can experience the impact of Labadie's acerbic, anti-collectivist writings from the Depression years in one full blast and begin this long-overdue exorcism.

## **The Father of Fascism**

Fascism may be briefly described as the reluctant acquiescence of capitalists to governmental regimentation in order to stem the increasing impotency of a one-sided wealth accumulation to satisfy the needs of a country. Coupled with this is the determination to put down by force any evidence of dissatisfaction among the people. Its growth is more or less revolutionary depending on the extent of democracy experienced in a country and on the existence of a revolutionary labor movement. In America, NRA-ism is the first evidence of "Fascistization", force not being greatly in evidence because of American traditions of liberty and because of the absence of a threatening revolutionary labor movement. A potent contributing factor to present economic conditions will concern us here.

Ever since the advent of "Scientific Socialism" every attempt to better the conditions of mankind has been labeled "Utopian" by the followers of Karl Marx. No one would dare belittle the valuable sociological contributions to the radical movement made by this great thinker. But to let this hide or completely overshadow his many errors and misconceptions is going too far. Let us not make a

god out of him. Strange that his adherents who so vehemently disavow the “great man theory” should place him on so high a pedestal. Were it not for the writings of Proudhon, Marx might be excused his ignorance of economics—the ignorance which determined his recourse to communism as the solution to economic problems—on the ground of what otherwise might have been the backward state of economic knowledge of his time. To hear them talk one might think that Marx was The Great One who “sees all, knows all”. The ignorance and arrogance of such social comedians deserves nothing but ridicule and condemnation. Doctrinaires of one true gospel, by their stubborn opposition to criticism, they prove by their attitude to be anything but scientific. Their loose and ready attribution of bad will or lack of brains not only to those who differ from them but also to all in their ranks who place a different interpretation to their bible, *Das Capital*, displays an intolerant fanaticism exceeded by few of the most intense religious bigots. Marx himself was not above duplicity. With arrant opportunism he calumniated and slandered in attempting to capture the First International. His attacks on his brother revolutionaries, the much more sincere Bakunin and the far greater economist, Proudhon, exhibit his egoistic shabbiness. His followers display the same characteristics and adopt the same tactics.

To condemn is to seek to hinder and it is precisely with this attitude Marxians have viewed every other revolutionary and reformatory group. “Is it good Marxism?” This is the one test applied by all the faithful. If not, down with it and down with the rascals propounding it.

The Marxian concept of historical materialism, with its overtones of fatalism, tends to soothe and benumb those coming under Marxian influence. It is Marx’s tortured truisms that give a plausibility to

his works in their totality. But his emphasis on economic determinism has paralyzed thought and activity. His followers seem to have nothing since his demise. They hopefully and impatiently wait for “the revolution”. But only economic crises are the opportune moment. We must lie low and wait until everything goes to the dogs, nay even assist it, if we are not to be utopian. This tragi-comic attitude has been held for at least the last fifty years during which every depression had been hailed as the messiah of “the revolution”. And not strange for those who understand capitalism, depressions are powerful factors for prolonging it. But even the high priests of Revisionism ignore what they deplore as “improvements of capitalism”; nothing can be done to save the human race but resort to that unnatural and tyrannical order of things—Communism.

The theory and application of class struggle, as Marxians understand it, is such as to alienate and divide classes of society who might otherwise work together for the achievement of desirable aims. The “petty bourgeois”, the small business man and the farmer, are hopeless cases until absolutely impoverished, and they must be put down when the time comes. Everyone who is not proletarianized, who is not “class conscious”, is the enemy of the proletariat and consequently an enemy to progress and to the human race. The actual effect of such fanaticism is obvious. It is supremely funny to hear impotent tyrants, wearing the cloak of revolutionists, tell what they are going to do, or rather what historical necessity is going to do for them, in the name of social revolution.

Marxians have a traditional hatred of liberty. “Liberty is a bourgeois conception,” said Lenin, the St. Peter of Marxism. And to label anything ‘bourgeois’ is to put it in the realm of the despicable. They claim to be working towards anarchism yet

they say we have anarchy now and call anarchists utopians and anarchism an impossible dream. "What is Liberty?" they sneeringly ask. Obviously such an attitude invites anti-libertarian retaliation. So much for the attitude of embryo despots.

Marxism is, today, with its half-baked economics, its fatalism, its metaphysical sociology, its' appeal to incompetency, to desperation, hate and violence, so far from reality that it has degenerated into the second phase of all religions—argumentation on points of doctrine. Marxism, today, is the art of disputation on "What Marx really meant". Yet all those who do not adhere to its musty half-truths are reactionary, yea, even counter-revolutionary. It would be unreasonable to attribute to Marx all the imbecilities indulged in by his alleged followers, but his own dogmatism and puerile errors must be given their due weight as contributing factors. Proletarians are considered to have a monopoly on progress. If a work of art doesn't indicate the "class struggle" or should a novel not indicate that its author had a firm grasp on the meaning of "surplus value" or "dialectical materialism" it is not art at all.

Marx's confused and metaphysical analyses, undesirable aims, and opportunistic means mislead and hamper sound efforts towards achieving sane economic conditions. His desire of complete State control has given the pretext for political systems to take on more functions and powers in the name of Socialism. For is not the duty of government to take care of the people and does not the more functions it assumes tend to make its role "revolutionary"? Have not Socialist Parties always been active in promoting this course? The only objection the orthodox make to this process is that it does not proceed according to Hoyle. Evolution is impossible; progress must be "revolutionary". Marx himself was keen enough to sense that his ill-conceived order of



things could come about only by a violent revolution. The stupidity and brutality of capitalism must be replaced by the stupidity and brutality of communism. Violence begets violence. As communists disclaim adherence to violent methods claiming them necessary only to oppose capitalist violence, so Fascism offers the same excuse.

The savagery of Fascism is largely a movement to stem the invasion of communism. But who can deny that socialist and communist activity, The Great Marxian Reaction, in checking every attempt to abolish economic privilege, did not bring on the very condition which seems to give choice to one of these alternatives? The revolution, to Marxians, is not a change of mental attitudes but a change in "conditions". The communist hierarchy changed both in Russia. When the fanatical group took advantage of the revolutionary disorder in Russia, established themselves in power after a revolution which had no earmarks of the "Marxian analysis", did they not use inquisitory methods to offset the very aims of the revolution as evinced by its slogans "Land to the peasants" and "All power to the Soviets"? This barbarous clamping-on of the Marxian ideology is, of course, "scientific." It appears as though the plausibility of Marxism which effectively alienated progressive classes from thinking for themselves and from effecting sound reforms, together with the belated attempts to put this "science" into practice in countries where the miraculously concurrent conditions necessary for its success are not apparent, does nothing but bring on the retaliatory violence of Fascism.

It is not difficult to believe that, were it not for Marxian Socialism, the "social problem" would today be a long way toward its solution. As the capitalists are instrumental in promoting the plausible system of communism, so communists are the effective instigators of Fascism of which they

claim to be the enemy. Insofar as the title “Father of Fascism” can be legitimately laid at the door of one individual, it takes no metaphysical reasoning to lay it to that great but mistaken genius—Karl Marx.

### **Why Fascism?**

Ever since Karl Marx invented “Scientific Socialism” the social experts have been telling the gaping crowd at the weekly “radical” meeting that the world was going to pot and that soon people would be walking the street in rags, at which time they would be ready to follow the select vanguard who would begin bumping off a lot of vicious capitalists, set up a proletarian dictatorship which would fix everything up right and wither away in due time, leaving a heretofore ignorant and suffering world in blissful paradise. All this was gospel truth for Prophet Marx had said so. By some kind of dialectic process he scientifically proved that the boss, by a two-for-me-one-for-you ledgerdemain, was not doing so well by the worker, a fact of which the latter was, of course, unaware. Everything Mr. Marx said was scientific and whatever anyone else said was utopian, i.e., moronic. Marx admitted that he knew it all and that anyone who doubted it was either a spy in the service of the wicked bourgeois, or a liar, or a crook, or maybe all three. But anyway things were going to happen just as he said, whether anyone liked it or not. Of course there would be bad people who’d try to stop the inevitable course of events who’d have to be liquidated when the time came, just to help things along, to sort-of grease the skids of Inevitability and guide it should it chance to go astray.

This unique tale has been handed to a bewildered proletariat for the last seventy five years. It soothed them and made thinking unnecessary for they could plainly see that all that was necessary was to sit on their cans and wait for good old historical

necessity to usher in the promised land, with the assistance of the scientists. Like Seventh-Day Adventists they have continually expected each business depression to be the messiah of the revolution which was, of course, always just around the corner like Hoover prosperity. They continually expected some vague monster called The Capitalist System to crumble to the ground. At this time the wise men should stop in with the blue prints of the cooperative commonwealth and show the people how to produce for use instead of profit. Pie was to be had, not in the sky, but here on earth, by and bye.

Not only because of the tortured truisms interspersed throughout the tale, but many sound and novel observations helped to make it plausible enough in its totality. In fact so much was this the case that other men who called themselves anarchists and who were not so sure they cared for this Inevitability were led to admit that as Mr. Marx's line was scientific theirs must not be and so were forced to fall back on human aspirations as their basis for action.

Now it is probable that even if Scientist Marx hadn't told them, people might have found out that all was not well with the world and might have done something about it. In fact the books tell us that some men did try to do something but every time they so tried the Marxian scientists said it was no use, you had to wait until everything went to the dogs, just as Marx had pointed out. Everybody who thought up any idea to make things better was just a reformer and was roundly condemned by them and hampered in every way. The result was that practically nothing was done since The Great Thinker uttered The Word.

Yes, meanwhile, believe it or not, during the time these social comedians made tedious repetition of this refreshing yarn (and anyone who varied

from it, or attempted to revise or differently interpret the words of the soothsayer, was considered a compromiser and a charlatan) nothing was being done to improve the lot of man and things were actually getting worse to the intellectual delight of the scientific revolutionists.

But at last, some enterprising individuals, inconsiderately not waiting for the Inevitable, and not desiring to lose their privileges of power and plunder, contrived to set up a corporate State, or some modification of it, the result of which procedure they called Fascism. The tempo of this activity varied with the extent of democracy experienced in a country and on the extent which the Power Seekers had inveigled the proletariat to trust in them. Where the Power Seekers had achieved any prominence the Power holders started to operate on them and so followed a heart-rending tragedy of persecution and murder with the law of like-it-or-else supreme, the Power Holders instead of the Power Seekers, however, doing the enforcing.

Now this order of events invoked many interpretations by different people. Some said of the Marxian Power Seekers that, while they were not completely "off" by a long shot, they relied too much on Inevitability and not enough on themselves, and worst of all, very little on brains. They even denied that Mr. Marx was God, that he not only did not know it all, which was blasphemy, but that he was, after all, very badly mistaken. They said even more.

1. That it was unfortunate that Dr. Marx, with petty egotism, was such small potatoes as to calumny and slander his brother revolutionaries in his attempt to be the big shot of the First International, because his followers adopt the same tactics.
2. That its overtones of fatalism have paralyzed

- thought, effort, and enthusiasm.
3. That the “respectable” portion of their members, dabbling in politics, have been instrumental in promoting and augmenting the activities of governments in assuming more functions and powers.
  4. That their undesirable aims are the necessary outcome of a faulty analysis of what is wrong with society and that the attempt to establish such an unnatural state of affairs must necessarily be by recourse to violence and brutality. And that their appeal to the worst characteristics in me—desperation, hate, and violence—only invites the same elements in retaliation.
  5. That their attempts to put their science into practice in a country which experienced a revolution having no earmarks of the Marxian analysis killed that revolutionary spirit and enthusiasm of the people and destroyed the actual aims of the revolution.
  6. And to sum up, that they have led progressively inclined movements up a blind alley and that, all in all, insofar as any individual can be said to be the Father of Fascism, that individual is, unwittingly, none other than the great but mistaken genius—Karl Marx.

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## Mental Attitudes

Men fight for several reasons but they generally strive to maintain the means by which they make their livelihood. Often these means are of such a nature as to induce men to fight for unworthy causes and thus become reactionary. Lack of knowledge and imagination, or confidence, explain the continual opposition to social change always part of the make-up of the so-called upper classes. Just or unjust are secondary considerations; what interests men is that by such and such a method their livelihood seems assured and they generally use all the forces at their command to retain the status quo. It is unusual to see men relinquish sinecures.

In an age of scarcity men fought for the necessities of life. With the progress of industry this meant a fight for localities, for livestock, for territory, for manufacturing privileges, trade privileges, and for markets, depending on whether hunting, herding, agriculture, manufacturing, or markets were predominating phases of industrial life. But as soon as men labored for their well-being the fight led directly to the idea of slavery. For if men could be enslaved, they could be robbed without fighting.

The outcome of the fight for supremacy was a class society corresponding to which were two mental attitudes—a master attitude and a slave attitude. The master, in order to be master, had to depend on himself to plan his way of life. The slave, having his duties determined by the master, developed a dependent attitude and formed the habit of looking up to authority.

Victors in the struggle, the master class found power and glory virtues; the slave, on the other hand, found submission and meekness aids to his peace. Drudging for his livelihood, the slave soon identified physical labor with his well-being. But to

the exploiting master, work was a sign of mediocrity and inferiority. The hierarchy in the master class rested on power and affluence; among the slaves on proximity to the master. The master had leisure to develop a culture; the slave was necessarily ignorant due to lack of opportunities. The master was the more creative, his energies were directed toward play and show, he possessed a dignity and self-respect far greater than the slave to whom culture seemed a needless appendage. The master was cunning and shrewd, losing these qualities only after years of affluence. He could be admired but not loved; the slave could be pitied but not admired. The master could often be feared, the slave seldom.

Between these two classes, and with the growth of manufacture and commerce, there arose an intermediate class whose affluence depended on personal ingenuity and ability, in whose attitude entered little of either the master or slave psychology but who clearly saw that their well-being depended on the freedom to exercise their abilities. Often of pioneer element because of the necessary effort of breaking away from old traditions, it was this class that was the motivating force behind the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century.

Revolutionary movements are generated by individuals from all three classes, caused by aims that range all the way from a change of human values to a desire for something to eat or wear. The more elemental the form of society, the more the material element predominates as the principal factor causing social revolution. Hence from the aristocracy come those to whom the crass inequalities, injustices and meanness in life injure their cultural sensibilities. From the middle class come those interested in physical well-being irrespective of how it is to be obtained. Of course this class distinction is more or less arbitrary for no such pigeonholing is possible, seeing the

overlapping complexities of interests in actual life.

Be all this as it may, it is commonly recognized that these three psychological attitudes are features of modern society, exemplified by the three classes—the exploited known in America as the “wage slave” and in Europe as the proletariat, the middle class known in Europe as the bourgeoisie, and the upper or ruling element known in modern industrial society as “the capitalist class”. The proletariat hates the two upper classes, the capitalist class despises those under them, and the middle class is out of sympathy with and fears them both. In America, even with a preponderance of “wage slaves” and with the middle class gradually diminishing, a middle class psychology predominates with a “get something for nothing” complex running through the entire fabric of economic life.

In America the characteristics peculiar to each of these classes are distinguished by their actions. The “wage slave” who would feel insulted if so designated does not know what to do with himself when out of work. His ambitions are stunted, he has little creative ability hence no hobby, he is unreflective, uncritical, and unresourceful. Used to taking orders and otherwise being directed, he has little self-reliance and aggressiveness, preferring to go along with the herd. He does not know how to enjoy himself, if and when leisure or temporary affluence should give him an opportunity to develop himself culturally he usually fails to do so. His closest approach to culture is to ape the wealthy. A “job” is all he wants, having come to identify drudgery with his well-being.

The middle class man has the strive-and-succeed complex. Not so affluent as to obviate careful calculation of expenditures, yet he frequently finds enough to spend on what his unfortunate brother might call unnecessaries—books, concerts, lectures,



and maybe vacation trips. He often makes special study of some particular thing, has a hobby or two—photography, a home shop, social activities. He tries to be “respectable” and live within his means. If you are an American, you know him well.

The rich, while having a passion for money-making, make epicureanism a business also. If newly rich their antics are comic, but if their riches have been of slower accumulation they often have acquired some genuine culture. They often give liberally to causes which they may but faintly appreciate—education, charity, or the opera. But they possess a snobbishness that generally precludes their having broad social sympathies.

Nevertheless from all these classes persons with revolutionary tendencies do emerge, differing in the nature and scope of their ideas, it is true, but with a genuine desire for fundamental changes in society ranging all the way from a change in social attitudes to changes in material conditions.

Learning from their masters, revolutionists from the slave class are, like them, often ruthless and in their hearts tyrants too. Motivated by two feelings—power and security—such a revolutionist is not interested in liberty and willingly subscribes to any dictatorship or any paternalist scheme that promises work and security. It is not necessary to get off his neck if he be but taken care of. It is to this class that the Rooseveltian dole system appeals, an example of which is those farmers who eagerly acquiesce in receiving bribes from the AAA. Not being able to raise his thoughts from his physical needs, the slave fights only from necessity. He necessarily adopts a materialistic philosophy, indeed, as the only true philosophy. He tries to prove work, as such, noble. Circumstances have made him ignorant, credulous, and incompetent. It is from this class that Marxian Socialism avowedly, and so-called share-

the-wealth schemes tacitly recruit their adherents; communism and paternalistic schemes are the slaves' solution to the economic and social problem. Sentimentalism and a begging attitude often tinged with arrogance. In the interval before he sees an opportunity to achieve his aims, the communist is interested in unemployment insurance, old age pensions, and anything in the nature of "security legislation". It is difficult to stop this sort of thing—arbitrary robbery of some people for the benefit of others, by the State—especially when many of the recipients are the flunkies of those in power, exploited dupes, soldiers, policemen, and, of course, the bureaucrats—men in uniform. (Uniform itself is a sign of servility—that a man *belongs* to an organization.) Slave minded revolutionists are humorously referred to as "belly revolutionists". Hate is their guiding revolutionary force and dictatorial power their goal.

The middle class is interested more in economic opportunities and equitable exchanges. They are more individualistic in the sense of letting the individual work on his own economic salvation. Money reform is the predominating feature of the economic proposals. Taking an intermediate position between the upper and lower classes, philosophically, they are more "conservative" than the proletariat and more "radical" than the capitalistic. "Justice" and "Liberty" might be their revolutionary watchwords.

Revolutionaries from the master class are avowedly idealistic, their proposals coming from their sentiments rather than from physical need. Their proposals frequently have a religious tinge.

In the light of the preceding sketchy analysis, and for what it is worth, we may judge the motivating ideas behind anarchism. While anarchism recruits its adherents from every economic and social predicament, it never enlists persons with a slave complex. The anarchist is more of the master tem-

perament demanding, however, complete authority only over things and matters that are his own concern. He is willing to grant his neighbor equal authority in his respective realm.

There are four great anarchists, distinct in their emphasis of their views, whose opinions may throw some light on the range of anarchistic thought. Nietzsche appeals to the aristocrat in man, Proudhon to his sense of justice, Kropotkin to his generosity, and Tolstoy to his sympathy and mercy, and will to abstain from cruelty. Nietzsche was opposed to the State because it hampered making strong characters, Proudhon because it was the essence of tyranny, Kropotkin because it exploited the weak, Tolstoy because it was based on violence. Nietzsche thought it futile to cater to the slave minded, Proudhon thought slave-mindedness would disappear with the inauguration of equity in exchanges, Kropotkin appealed to the slave to free himself, Tolstoy that slavery was to disappear by the practice of brotherly love—by a process of inducement rather than compulsion. The first two appealed more to logic: the latter to sentiment. Nietzsche felt content to lead the way, let those follow who will or can. He would neither drag nor coerce them. If some choose to be slaves that was none of his concern. After all it is a contradiction in terms to say that a man may be a voluntary slave.

Anarchism will be seen to be an idealistic philosophy in the sense that it believes freedom will come from the conscious activity of men. No automatic process is to bring it about. Moreover it is individualistic too, in more senses than one. For one thing its initial success rests on the activity and feelings of individuals—it will necessarily be a minority movement, and a very small minority, for many years to come. Anarchism is propagated by men who hold self-mastery—the right of the individual

to determine his own way in life—above all other so-called social considerations.

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## Fighting and Folly

It is a commonly observed fact that men like danger and fighting. Why is this? Can it be possible that our love for competitive struggle signifies a profound conviction that, somehow, antagonism, in itself, has an important bearing on promoting progress? That competition, as Proudhon put it, in its broader aspects is a productive force in social economy? I believe judicious analysis will impel us to answer in the affirmative.

In earlier stages of human development, danger was an inevitable element in life. It was in overcoming obstacles that living was insured. Men struggled among themselves to acquire the then insufficient means for the nourishment of all. In conquest, success spelled well-being and the losers died off. Through natural selection the spirit of struggle and the love of winning remained. Men like to prove their worth and superiority by competition, for success is a confirmation of our primary urge, the will to live.

In primitive life, success often meant failure and death to losers. One's achievements often involved the hampering of competitors. So, in the course of time, I suppose faulty reasoning lent the belief that another's hardships and failures necessarily meant one's advantage. We often today secretly rejoice in the calamities of others, knowing that we have avoided like fate. It is only faulty

reasoning, however, which induces some men to believe that their benefit necessarily results in, or necessitates, the disadvantage of rivals, or impels others to condemn competition as unsocial. These are merely short-sighted views, derived apparently only when few individuals are concerned, never when considered from a societal viewpoint.

In its economic aspects, competition is a productive force which greatly supplements its great allied productive principles: division of labor, machinery, credit, commerce, and liberty. As we know, division of labor capitalizes on human capacities; machinery eliminates human effort thus freeing man from drudgery; credit promotes mutuality by spreading the advantages of collective force; commerce stimulates consumption and thereby production; and liberty gives free play to initiative. But it is competition that insures responsibility, socializes knowledge, and stimulates progress. It is as necessary as its antithesis, monopoly, which implies productive independence. Every scheme for social betterment which fails to recognize the necessity of giving free play to each and every one of the productive principles deserves the appellation "utopian". Nevertheless, we hardly see a societal proposal that does not have as its essence the legal creation of some new monopoly or privilege. (Perhaps it should be noted, for clearness, that there are two distinct causes of monopoly—one natural, the other artificial, that is, by the legal creation of monopolistic privileges by the State. It is the latter to which Anarchism is opposed.)

It was Pierre J. Proudhon who first showed the profound bearing of these elementary productive principles on the evolution of economic society, which is to say, on the course of history. He showed how man, zigzagging through time, was more or less a puppet to this ignorance of economic forces.

He predicted man's attempts to conduct production and distribution by decree. And he showed that "man could neither think better nor act worse." He referred to collectivism. Probably no man since his time has as thoroughly understood economic laws and their application to human society as did Proudhon.

Thus we have reformers and revolutionists all with one foot more or less in the utopia which Proudhon made it his life work to fight against. Marx, filching from Proudhon, and also using the Hegelian dialectic, became confused in the same metaphysical jargon he convicted Proudhon of and wound up with a system. Kropotkin apparently knew practically nothing of economic principles, he tried to base economics on the emotions, and **he** erected a system. All the utopians before Proudhon erected systems, and all the "planned economies" conceived since his times are systems. Systems are always the result of either of two things—insufficient knowledge or ulterior motive. *Gesell's* "Natural Economic Order" is a system originated by a libertarian laboring under serious fallacies on the nature of money and credit; technocracy is a system promulgated by men who understand the technique of production but who lack knowledge of economic law; the fascistic Corporate State is a system the ulterior motive of which is to preserve the status quo; and communism results from the incompetent mental efforts of the proletariat to formulate an ideal or "classless society". But they are all, from the standpoint of the intent from which they originate, utopias. That is to say, they all overlook important and inevitable features of life, especially productive life. Living, in all its phases, is too broad and complex to be straight-laced into a system. Difference of opinion necessitates as many forms of productive endeavor. Thus, *Gesell's* so-called "Free

Money" system would collapse when it came to a showdown<sup>1</sup>. Technocracy will necessarily fail to accomplish its objectives as it does not take into consideration all the factors in production. Fascism will not be able to stem the course of progress. Neither will communism ever get an effective start because it will ever be opposed by thinking people. Nevertheless, they all contain important elements of truth, both in their criticisms of the existing economic order and in the proposals they embrace. Yet all attempts to inaugurate any of them as *systems* will necessitate the continual and increasing use of tyranny and violence. It is improbable that any of them could last even as long as the prevailing Capitalism which is now heading into bankruptcy. Well-intentioned as they all are, Gesell, Kropotkin, Marx, and the technocrats are all utopians of the first water. The well versed will ever smile at the naïve attempts to favorably compare any of these men with Proudhon.

Pierre J. Proudhon is the only man, to date, with the exception of those of his followers who understood him, who was unalterably opposed to systems. He is the only man, to my knowledge, who made a comprehensive and exhaustive exposition of the effects of the great principles of social economy and *who showed that association, the fatal basic recourse of all utopians, is not an organic law, that it is not an economic force, and that it is not a principle of social order.* That is to say, Proudhon claimed that while the helplessness of men in isolation impelled them to associate, it was a mistake to attempt to decree *which way* they must associate. Proudhon held that contradiction was an inevitable feature of life, that, *in one sense*, nothing could be abolished in this world, that the social problem was one of reconciliation and equilibrium. He showed, not by dreams and aspirations but by fact and logic, that justice and

equity demanded the untrammelled liberty of economic forces, that the end and the means of progress is liberty, and that social order is achievable only in a positive Anarchy. Anarchy, to Proudhon, meant a philosophy of Change, and in this view he anticipated the conclusions of evolutionary philosophers. Anarchy did not mean a set form of organization but meant the liberty to try all for ns. But liberty also meant equality of opportunity which always tends toward, if never arriving at, absolute economic equality. Human equality is the unconscious aim which impels social legislation, but man was not to be blamed if, in his ignorance, he failed to understand that in so legislating he was frustrating the very thing he was trying to achieve.

Unlike Kropotkin who was over-influenced by humanitarian feelings, unlike Gesell whose fallacies about money would not permit him to totally free himself from the necessity of the State, unlike Marx whose faulty metabolism caused a venomous hate to mar his reasoning, unlike the technocrats who are superficially influenced by temporary manifestations in society, Proudhon was not influenced by preconceived ideas. A study of the evolution of his thought will evince that Proudhon did not start out with something to prove in his mind, but that like a true scientist, he was trying to find out something. It is true, as Marx disparagingly said of him, that Proudhon was looking for societary principles. But is this not what a real scientist does—endeavor to discover natural laws?

Proudhon proved that there *is* an economic science. He showed that economic laws were independent of the will of man, although man could profit by knowledge of them when he understood them. He exhausted ways of demonstrating that it is impossible to ascertain the collective opinion of society, indeed, that the conception of it is generally



a fiction. Thus, besides showing that the State originated for robbery, he demonstrated that despotism and robbery are necessary concomitants of the State—that governments are necessarily impotent, meddlesome, and reactionary. Proudhon was the first man to show that industrial and commercial profit was caused predominantly by the price of credit, not vice versa. He was the first to explain the cause of interest, attributing to the hostage of money & to monopolistic control consequent from royalty of gold. He predicted the then coming power of the financial capitalist. He was the first to demolish, analytically, the fiction of the productivity of capital. Proudhon showed the complete ignorance of socialists on the nature of money and credit and their utter bewilderment when it came to the question of distribution, all of whom had recourse to arbitrary law to solve the problem. Thus these laws range all the way from the transparent communistic law: “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” to the arbitrary determinations of value by such factors as energy (technocrats) and time (a common socialist unit). Marx came close to the solution of the problem of value, giving an exact abstract definition of value, but he did not know the clue of social organization by which value could be determined.

Possibly these seem pretty broad assertions, and no doubt will be resented by followers of the several men in question. Nevertheless, a conviction of their truth has been arrived at through a study of economics which comprised volumes of utopian aspirations, volumes of bunk, a few sound books, and, fortunately, four great works of Proudhon—*What Is Property?*, *System of Economical Contradictions*, *Solution of the Social Problem*, and *The General Idea of the Revolution of the Nineteenth Century*. True, understanding Proudhon might require much supplementary read-

ing, for he did not always deal in details. Moreover, he is not an easy man to understand, partly because of his recourse to paradox, partly because of his peculiar metaphysical style, and partly because of his comprehensive manner of handling the topic at hand. But once one gets the “hang” of his style and the trend of his thought, he will be prepared to receive some worthwhile and profound sociological knowledge. It is significant to note the savageness of the attacks Marx made upon him, the savageness of a man whose inferiority complex not only colored all his writings, but which, when coupled with his great intellect and his unfortunately mad desire to be known as the greatest of socialistic thinkers, caused him to ridiculously hate with an especial venom anyone who promised to be a successful rival; these facts, I say, might indicate Proudhon’s genius.

We were talking of fighting, were we not? Yes, let us fight it out. Let us test our ideas in the fire of criticism. Let us battle, using thought and argument as weapons. If our arguments are false, down we will go in the conflict, but fortunately *we* will live to choose better ideas in the future. Progress is made by talking, discussion, & controversy. There need not be so much “comrade” stuff, the polite deference to what may be considered the nonsensical views of friends. But let us not be hypocrites, we may fight like cats and dogs in the field of controversy, indeed, the more criticism and the more ideas advanced, the more will the subjects argued become clear and vitalized. But let us try to maintain the judicial calm, the respect for an opponent’s *person*, the knowledge that anyone should have the right to be wrong without thereby necessarily deserving the epithet, scoundrel. It may, at times, be difficult, but it can be done.

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1 **Silvio Gesell** (March 17, 1862—March 11, 1930) was a German merchant and a strange, unduly neglected economist who served as finance minister in Gustav Landauer's doomed Bavarian republic. Gesell's combination of autodidactic scholarship and mingling of unorthodox economic theory with libertarian social utopian aspirations make it difficult to position him within the history of economic thought, or to classify him politically. While sharing what he believed to be the goals of socialism, Gesell rejected the Marxist solution of collective property and a centralized state economy, which he saw as amounting to the "abominable rule of officials, the death of personal freedom, personal responsibility and independence". Gesell was friends with anarchists like Gustav Landauer and the anti-state sociologist Franz Oppenheimer (who helped develop the "conquest theory of the State") and there was a considerable degree of practical cooperation between Gesell and the anarchists of his time. But Labadie didn't consider him a consistent anarchist and took particular issue with Gesell's economic reform scheme, *The Natural Economic Order*, because a minimal State and the monetary authorities still played an important role in it (however, in the forward to his last published work of 1927, which is dedicated to two anarchists, Gesell claimed to have found a solution to the "monetary problem" which allowed him to discard of the State completely).

Gesell wrote a lot and his collected works amount to 18 volumes, but the book he's most remembered for is the aforementioned *The Natural Economic Order*. In it, Gesell proposed that communities seeking to rescue themselves from economic collapse should issue their own "free" currency. To discourage people from hoarding it, they should impose a fee (called *demurrage*), which has the same effect as negative interest. The back of each banknote would contain 12 boxes. For the note to remain valid, the owner had to buy a stamp every month and stick it in one of the boxes. It would be withdrawn from circulation after a year. Money of this kind is called stamp scrip: a privately issued currency that actually becomes *less* valuable the longer you hold on to it (which would theoretically stimulate continuous economic growth without inflation).

One of the first places to experiment with this idea was the Austrian town of Wörgl in 1932. Like most communities in Europe at the time, it suffered from mass unemployment and was being bankrupted by the 1930's Depression. The town implemented a "stamped" currency concept based on Gessell's monetary theories and the result was that the notes circulated quickly. People spent them in shops. The town quickly used them to pay its bills. All told, the currency made no less than twenty complete circles in under thirty days. Within the first four months the town saw over 100,000 shillings worth of

public works funds, unemployment tumbled and workers prospered, until the German central bank outlawed the experiment and the Nazi's ascended to power.

Robert Anton Wilson once referred to Gessell as "the only Utopian economist I ever liked."

## **Economic Adolescence (1937)**

It was Mr. Mencken, I believe, who several years ago asserted that the American was becoming less like a lion and more like a lamb every day. What may have been a shrewd observation at the time is today only too patent. It is quite natural, and "all too human," for man to acquiesce in, even strive for, getting a living in the easiest manner possible. That the American pioneers pushed forward into the wilderness depending on nothing but their own initiative, courage, and resourcefulness can be easily laid to necessity, not having an organized political group promising rabbits from a silk hat.

Today that self-reliant spirit has changed to one of whimpering and complaint. The world owes us a living, and the State is the big papa who is going to get it for us. The State is the new God which society supplicates and adores, to the delight of the political organizers. "Put us in for we know the way out'," say the saviors. The world seems to be becoming a paradise for social scientists of communist and fascist patterns. Any political popinjay can advance if he promises enough without appearing too obviously a faker. It's a disgusting spectacle to see men drowning in their own ignorance and credulity.

Professional fixers, both the existing and aspiring messiahs—New Dealers, Marxian Socialists, Technocrats, and pink economists—pointing to our

“poverty in the midst of plenty,” bewail the fact that the State is not doing its duty in caring for its subjects. Either as “demanders” on the one hand or “promisers” on the other, the State machine is depended upon to ameliorate our ills and supply our wants. How or where it gets its horn of plenty is of small concern. The predatory octopus, which produces nothing, is expected to miraculously become both good and bountiful.

Thus, Social Creditors belligerently demand “dividends” from the State. The State should monopolize the coinage and regulation of money, say Mr. Coughlin and others. The State should pay the aged \$200 a month, avers Mr. Townsend. THE STATE SHOULD RUN EVERYTHING, say communists and their first cousins, fascists. And the eagerness and alacrity with which the supposed beneficiaries flock to their respective shepherds ably demonstrate the mental incompetency and the moral degeneracy of the American public mind. Very few are those who think of the simple expedient of tossing the monster of privilege, the State, that is, a horde of political leeches, out on its ear so that each may have an opportunity to do something for himself. In the face of the prevailing credulity, it is to wonder if it is not confident effrontery to say of the related despotisms, Communism and Fascism, that they “can’t happen here.” The bald fact is that on such fertile ground they are already well on their way.

What is the genesis of the essentially parasitic and hypocritical attitude so prevalent in modern society? Perhaps an imaginary glimpse at primitive times will suggest the origin of this “herd instinct.”

The will-to-live, plus scarcity, begets a scramble. It is difficult to conceive of any natural cause for the origin of physical conflict except scarcity. Undoubtedly, in early times, the strong “ganged up” on the weak, to rob and eventually enslave and

exploit them. It may be that the weaker, at times, banded together in defense, and by developing numbers conquered the strong. But always in the ensuing shuffle, predatory cunning, like scum on a wine barrel, ever rises to the top; just as sure as incompetence and naiveté seep to the bottom.

It is immaterial whether “inferiority” and “superiority” be matters of chance, or self-conviction. The fact remains that the weaker hated and feared their respective superiors in conquest, for we hate only what we fear. And what we formerly feared, yet have conquered, we come to despise. Thus it is quite likely that races and peoples who are now despised were once the superiors in intelligence and ability. Perhaps the world is witnessing a repetition of the process—the coming ascendancy of the present economic and social outcasts whose former superiority became in time a boomerang.

Now what is more natural than for the insecure to desire security; what more opportune for the prevailing “inferior” than to desire equality? For equality to the underprivileged signifies an advancement, a stepping stone on the road to will-to-power. Thus, blindly reaching for ill-defined aims, we see the common man demanding “security legislation”—unemployment insurance, old age pensions, “welfare,” doles, subsidies, bounties, etc., etc. Thus the pleas for State aid to ameliorate man’s plight—equality, even though it be equal slavery. Thus, the current movements of fascism and communism—forced unification, compulsory cooperation, the subjugation of the individual to the supposed common good. The destruction of heterogeneous parts in order to have a homogenous whole, as if man existed for society instead of society being the spontaneous organization of free individuals.

Close scrutiny and ruthless thought show the gist of these movements to be a reversion to the

paternalistic communistic motto: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs—the distributive law of the family wherein the adult cares for the child. Society is to become one big family in which the unfledged may dip indiscriminately into the public pie. Such is the height of aspiration of the infantile mind. And politicians are smart enough to see a godsend in the sentiment. We hear them advocating, “Taxation according to the ability to pay.” Politicians well know they cannot get blood out of a stone. America today is following with alarming rapidity the course of Europe in adopting the distributive law of economic adolescence.

The proponents of communism profess great love for mankind. Service, work is a joyful, altruistic contribution to the common fund, put forth in the guise of humanitarianism—these are the pretentious articles of faith, wish thoughts of incompetency always impressive to empty heads. Self-interest is condemned as unsocial, the profit motive must be uprooted, supplanted, presumably, by the loss motive, for the competent. Yet for what other reason do communists yearn for their benevolent paradise except for the belief that it will prove *profitable* to them? For “profit” cannot be legitimately divorced from its elementary meaning—benefit, advantage. To whom other’s advantage except the incompetent is it to force the “able” to support the “needy”? Is it too much to suggest that ability and need are coincidental? Is living on one’s merits too precarious a life? We are not going to promote a competent society by placing a premium on “neediness.” Communism is indeed the philosophy of the child minded.

Notwithstanding whatever humanitarian feelings may prompt them, a realistic consideration of the fundamental law of organic life, egoism, makes obvious the transparent hypocrisy and self-delusion of our budding socialistic emancipators. In a work of

a late economist appeared a humorous item relating to a meeting of communists, where the egalitarian and altruistic element ran rampant. How eager were the comrades, in their love for their fellow man, to devote all their efforts for his cause! How imbued with the wish to share and share alike! Thereupon some obstreperous individual suggested they all dump their monetary possessions into a common pot to be redistributed equally. With chilled ardor, and heated ire, the practical one was ejected as a trouble maker. Each had testily calculated, "How am I going to come out in the deal?" Those had refused to pony up. And a beautiful proposal went haywire because of one little cold fact—egoism. There can be no enduring social proposal based on hypocrisy.

The fallacy of common ownership, with its diffusion of responsibility, (or the necessity of centralized authority) was impressed on me lately when I accepted an invitation to visit a communistic colony. Having occasion to use a toilet, I found it stopped up, and it had been so knowingly used, judging from an unprofessional olfactory and ocular estimate, by at least the last half dozen patrons. The thought arose that it was unfortunate that the dear comrades had neither the "need" nor the "ability" to remedy the situation. Not that I blamed them exactly, for did not the toilet belong to the commune? Then let the commune fix it. No one individual was the commune. Evidence of neglect existed in other parts of the colony, the inevitable result, I thought, of lack of individualization, that is, property. There were extenuating circumstances, one due to the fact that the colonists had bitten off more than they could chew. Their best asset was social good will (even some of which appeared to me, an individualist, to be largely "put on") which was not sufficient to overcome the handicaps which they, in common with every other enterprise, are confronted with—



interest, taxes, and an ineffective market demand. It was a saddening experience.

The primary motive for economic production is to reap the advantages of physical and mental effort. Benefit proportional to effort is the natural remunerative law among adult beings—not benefit irrespective of productive prerequisite, so endearing to misled impoverished classes. What the individual needs is opportunity to do for himself, as he wishes, independently if desired—not to be compulsorily organized into forced interdependence. The profit-motive being an inevitable characteristic of human nature becomes thereby the predominating motive in the production and circulation of wealth. A voluntary exchange implies that both parties believe they have profited thereby. The common aspiration of communistic sects to abolish the profit-motive demonstrates the puerility of their proposals. Faced with that most powerful of human urges next to the will-to-live, the desire to be free, it is little wonder that communists must subscribe to cataclysm for the inauguration of their reign, and condone intimidation and coercion for its maintenance.

If we, as adults, accept the economics of the family, we cannot do so without accepting its corollary, paternal authority. With the profit motive presumably annihilated (at least among all but the organizers) because of forced collectivization and denials of independence, nothing can be done without governmental coercion, as may be plainly seen in bolshevik and fascist paradises. Here the profit motive has need to be supplanted by intimidation, forced labor, indoctrination of hypocritical ethics, the bait of privilege and other dubious honors, bonus systems, speed-up by Stakhanovitz pace setters, spies—everything but allowing the individual freedom and independence to work out his economic salvation on the basis of self-interest.

If we look at the other side of the picture, the so-called upper crust of the prevailing capitalistic world, we also find a subtle desire to be kept. Capitalists, as a rule, are exceptionally competent men who nevertheless find it expedient to use the general political superstition for their own ends. They have money with which to elect those who will legislate in their interests. It is no special crime to be rich while acting in conformity with the current mores. Instead of blaming their own stupidity, the working class are too prone to ascribe the causes of their predicament to the rich. Are the rich any more greedy than the poor? It is doubtful. Yet the rich have made a great hullabaloo, in the name of liberty, anent the State's increasing aptitude to placate and bribe the lower classes. They who are the standard bearers of the prevailing capitalism prate of "rugged individualism," which may be very good if they believed what was sauce for the goose was also sauce for the gander. It is not within the bounds of brief comment to state the nature and effects of capitalist privileges, privileges which assist sundry in living off the efforts of the real producers of wealth. But it is worthy to mention the spectacle, amusing were the effects not so tragic, of the recipients of government protection and coddling clamoring for liberty and rugged individualism.

We have heard the stentorian voice of one and the flannel mouth of another of our discarded hence disgruntled politicians. We have seen munitions makers active in the American Liberty (sic) League. We have read the wolfish utterances of a publisher mountebank whose domain of thousands of acres in a state posts guards on its borders to see that none but the propertied classes enter. And last but not least, we have the New Deal's horde of bureaucrats with their crackpot schemes trying everything to salvage a faulty economy except hitting at the roots of capitalistic privileges.

Yes, indeed, it is unfortunately a common human aspiration to be kept. I suppose we all have had dreams of a rich aunt dying and leaving us a fortune. Something for nothing, Ah!! A world of softies cherishing a solacing belief that the State is the nursemaid of society! Verily, man is egoistic to the point of parasitism. And our socialistic brethren, in their dearth of ideas, cannot see that their utopias but perpetuate and intensify the evils of the regime they aspire to overthrow.

The desire to consume being the only sound basis for production, it is therefore over the question of distribution around which most economic controversy lies. This involves the question of value, the understanding of which is necessary for any theory of exploitation. An evaluation implies a relation, a comparison; it is impossible to judge between a more or less efficient method of production, or the relative "worth" of labor and its products, unless there are two or more independent producers of the thing in question. As a consequence of economic privilege, economic development has led us into monopoly. Monopoly, abetted and upheld by the State, causes exploitation and stagnation; competition, on the other hand, impels progress, and when free perpetually adjusts prices to production costs and continually offers better goods at cheaper prices. The motives of men cannot be a safe guide for judging the effects of their actions. Egoism or altruism, with independent producers competing, the results are the same. For no one can "profit" except he do so by offering better articles and services. These are anarchistic affirmations.

Unless society can forget its stomach long enough to think and perceive the fatuity of the Santa Clause philosophy, we shall see but idle wishing. Unless we have clear ideas of what conditions we want, and endeavor to get them without resorting to

the violent means which have resulted in despotisms, we'll continue to wallow in injustice. Unless we realize that the State is willing to do anything but get off the backs of the industrious, we'll be the dupes of economic robbery. Here's a thought: The man who goes to the polls is endeavoring to elect a boss, not only over himself, but over you, and you, and me. Such petty tyrants, in abetting political authority, are not only slaves themselves but are willing to be accomplices in depriving their neighbors of their liberty. This should leave us open for suggestions.

As I grow older, I find myself becoming increasingly petulant. And having been quite an avid dabbler in philosophy and in later years in sociology and economics, many of my animadversions are directed toward those I consider scatterbrained thinkers on these subjects. It seems that if the problems of society were stated, analyzed and attacked with the logical procedure common in the physical sciences, much worthwhile knowledge would result. But books are deluged upon us so wordy as to inundate what should be clear and decisive statements about the particular problems involved. The result is a tired reader bewildered by a hodge-podge of opinions.

There are only two logical methods of social organization, individualism and collectivism, and each requires a particular method of social control, viz., totalitarianism or anarchy. As an anarchist, I am opposed to the totalitarianism of both communism (economic theory) and fascism (political theory) which in practice are as alike as two peas in a pod for the very reason that every economic system must be guided by some laws, complete community of property therefore requiring unity of control, and every political system implies rule, totalitarianism necessarily meaning absolute control over every phase and detail of the individual's life.

## On "Society"

You reformers want to "transform" the State from an instrument of oppression, tyranny and infringement of rights into a cooperative agency for subserving the common purposes of Men; anarchists want to abolish the State. As anarchists are not opposed to such cooperative agencies as you mention, obviously the State means something different between us. These divergent meanings have their origin in two fundamentally different ways at looking at the relations between men. One is the collective; the other the anarchistic. One tries to organize society; the other to free it. One looks for a form of organization; the other for a set of principles. If it is the aim of society to discover some form of organization to which it must adhere, then some means must be established to force conformity to that form. To force adherence to organization implies coercion and invasion; to defend a set of principles is not invasive. In a free society many different forms of organization are possible. Anarchy is not a concept of organized society. And as it implies a society existing by virtue of voluntary agreement, even the associations for defense of its principles must be voluntary. I beg to submit that government and defense are antithetical, that organization implies conformity which may be either imposed or agreed to, and that without a distinction between invasion and defense no science of society is possible. But perhaps my meaning is not yet clear, and it may be well to explain the origin of the two divergent attitudes toward society.

In primitive life, group life was essential if the individual was to survive. Man had to organize, for the collective good. The well-being of the individual was subordinated to the welfare of the group, even

sacrificed if necessary. At this time what we know as the “herd instinct” was formed. It might be called the philosophy of “we”. The essence of the instinct is unity. Strict tribal codes and decisions for the whole group were necessary. Splitting up meant disaster.

Remember too that the more primitive the time the more were organisms similar, as we observe today among ants and bees which seem to us to have no individuality. Their desires being the same they could rightly speak of themselves as a “we”. But the evolutionary trend of organisms is toward individuality, that is, dissimilarity.

As productive knowledge grew, and division of labor began, men were better able to more loosely federate—they were on the road to the possibility of individual independence, which in practical life means individual liberty and all the mutual interdependence which free choice implies and finds advantageous. They could split up (disassociate) without perishing thereby. And with the progress of individuality (differentiation) it was found that the best way to settle differences was by splitting up—freeing each other from mutual interference or conformity to one way of life. When this idea struck the human mind, the philosophy of anarchism was born.

It was probably Max Stirner who first daringly proclaimed that it was the individual that was the important thing, not the group, and that when the individual understood his dignity as a human being he would cast off the superstitious chains that were hampering his freedom, and then groups, when there were groups, would be composed of free men. Josiah Warren proclaimed his discovery that disassociation of those with divergent views was the secret of harmony, not combination. Proudhon held that association was not a “social law” and that men who were seeking for systems for society were

utopians. And later Herbert Spencer announced the principle of equal freedom which aimed to give the individual as much liberty as was compatible with equal liberty.

In short, progress is out of communism toward individualism, out of a condition of status to one of contract, out from authority toward liberty. But the “herd instinct” still remains. We still hear men talk of “we” as though men’s minds and desires and needs were uniform. This is the root of collectivism, nationalism, governmentalism. Nearly all men who recourse to the State are imbued with this herd instinct. And the resultant of all their well laid plans is inevitably leading us to totalitarianism—and the individual, as such, is becoming a nullity.

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## Reflections on Liberty

### 1. *The Outlook*

Upon a groaning humanity preys a type of barbarian called the politician. An engine of depredation—the State—ever avid for greater territory and authority, encroaches with accelerating rapidity on the bodies and souls of men. Which is perhaps as it should be. If he but understood the preposterous frauds and bluff perpetuated upon him! How many scan the horizon in hopelessness, reluctant to enter the stream of prejudice and stupidity, of cupidity and downright political chicanery—yet aware of the

possibility of averting cataclysm? Perhaps the achievement of liberty rests on a pacific disposition: who knows? Surely, on respect for one's neighbor's individuality. Is the love of liberty an instinct? Or does it await intelligent self-interest?

## 2. *On Liberty*

What is liberty? Would it be disconcerting to many self-styled libertarians to learn that they are but feebly aware of the meaning of liberty, and the reason why the concept arose? Liberty was *thought of* only because of the nature of individuality, which is known *only by differences*. Were we all alike, or in agreement, no such concept as liberty would have arisen in the human mind, and, indeed, *there would be no social problem*. The fact that we differ and disagree, and that we have various tastes, needs, wants, and opinions, which must necessarily come into conflict with our union, should urge us to be free from interference one from another. Liberty, thus, *necessarily* has disassociation as a basic recourse. And to be free means to be as *independent* as one wills, or as interdependent as each, to his own satisfaction, finds mutually advantageous. Unity? Ah, yes! Unity, but only on the proposition that disunity is the basis of human harmony and genuine solidarity. How paradoxical this all sounds!

## 3. *Security vs. Liberty*

Unfortunate it is that many, if not most, libertarians *confuse liberty with economic security*. Thus, as security is usually found in association, *practically every panacea* sailing under the banner of liberty has as its essence some form of monopolistic union, usually some monopoly of function by the State! Further, liberty has been so confused with levelism, and such denials of independence as are implied in socialism and communism, that this confusion has unwittingly



been the abettor of reaction. Startling as it might seem, the bald fact is that such proposals are “securitarian” rather than libertarian. And in practice will soon be found to degenerate into the most insidious forms of tyranny.

#### 4. *Individuality vs. Collectivism*

In the world of social thought, two completely incompatible world outlooks, or as the Germans have it, *weltanschauungs* come into conflict. Individualism rests on the autonomy of the individual; collectivism embraces the group viewpoint. The first seeks the greatest amount of individual liberty, for the individual *as such*; the second seeks to make the individual happy in some form of corporate existence—ever searching for some ideal scheme of association, its exponent are essentially organizers. Aiming primarily at material well-being, collectivism is materialistic; while individualism, aiming at unqualified liberty of the individual, may be called, for want of a better word, spiritualistic, or perhaps, idealistic.

Individualism offers no specific forms of association, but stipulates instead that whatever forms exist in compatibility with liberty must exist by virtue of the voluntary consent of the participants, i.e., they must be mutualistic; collectivism, on the other hand, assuming the necessity of interdependence, and searching for associational *forms*, must depend on stated reciprocal duties, both in relation of each to the other and of all to the collectivity. On the pretext of humanitarianism, such enforced cooperation as is implied in communism, socialism, syndicalism, co-operatives, nationalism, the corporate state (these are all but manifestations of the same herd idea) bid for adherents. There are two conditions of mind,—and this is the fundamental difference between these

world outlooks: Collectivism is based on an organic conception of society; Individualism takes an anarchistic view;—and the battle will be fought along these lines—whether or not the individual is to submerge his individuality into the mass. (It must not be inferred that all those who *call* themselves “individualists” actually accept the anarchistic view. Many are merely herd-men apologists of the “democratic” status quo.)

A few derivations may be noted. In associational activity, the less definite the duties prescribed, the more insidious and debilitating will be the mutual control, leading finally into mutual distrust and ultimate disintegration. All governments, all governmental schemes, all formulas of association (socialism, communism, fascism, etc.)—all these are but applications of the herd-instinct bent on subjugating the individual for the supposed common good—are destined to go upon the rocks as soon as the individual recognizes himself, his self-respect and dignity as a *unique* being. For the individual is indestructible; he existed prior to institutions and forms of association, he is superior to them and when he *realizes himself* will accept no duties except those which he voluntarily assumes.

##### 5. *On the Progress of Societies*

A study of the history of man will evince a process of differentiation. Both economic and political progress had been in the direction of decentralization, notwithstanding the fact of increased interdependence. The trend has been from status to contract. And any attempt to achieve security *at the expense of this tendency* will be met with such obstacles as tend to freeze the status quo. This is the meaning of fascism, in the face of the growing movements for “collectivization”. In attempting to bar one evil, society allows the same evil to enter,

but through another door. Instead of trying to *break* monopoly, current social movements seek to *capture* it, and in the rush any distinction between political and economic becomes immaterial. The mass-man is having his day!

The difference between Marxism (and other group schemes) and Anarchism plainly indicate the struggle between mere physical satisfaction and the emancipation of the soul of man. Marxism is essentially a “bean philosophy”—material well-being is placed above individual inclinations in their varieties of the urge to life and expression. What has mutual aid, whether voluntary or enforced, to do with individuality? Nothing, except as a *means*. Its motive is economic security rather than individual liberty. Not that anarchists are not concerned with material well-being, not at all, although liberty does not mean freedom from folly nor from beans. Even while a slave waxes fat, a free man *could* starve. But would he when access to the means of livelihood have been divorced from law-made monopoly, whether private or collective? And would he not prefer to associate whenever and however such appeared serviceable to him? Has he need of *professional* organizers?

#### 6. *Equality vs. Leadership*

Only similarities can be measured. And men, rather than being equal, are dissimilar. To speak of equality without referring to specific qualities and abilities is to utter sounds. In specific things men are not equal, but in social value they may become so. This is the function of competition to achieve by adjusting and equilibrating social forces. Both consciously and unconsciously, every social action testifies to the fact that equality is the social ideal. But does equality negate leadership? Hardly.

Associational activity requires direction and

aim. And it is part of the function of division of labor to select leadership. This would be true even if men were equal in managerial ability, for organization requires coordination. Even so, but they are not. Some lack the initiative to direct and coordinate. This, again, does not mean that they may not be equal in social value. To repeat, competition and supply and demand would adjust that. Would artists, poets, inventors, and other pioneers and innovators be fitted for, say, industrial management? It is unlikely.

In a free society a man would find his place, for competition would impel him to gravitate to where his talents and merits would be recognized, and if these were faculties for coordinating he would be recognized as a natural leader by those who acceded to his ability, in whatever particular field it might be. In the diversity of functions he would assume that of director. By the very fact of freedom he could not monopolize this function nor could he coerce because he could direct only those who had confidence in his judgment. Moreover he must meet the competition of other leaders who might undermine his pretensions by displaying better ability. Thus, associational activity would be in continual flux. For a free society is a mutable society, and no one can predict with certainty what its precise conditions may be.

### *7. Fatality vs. Free Will*

Science postulates an inevitability in the nature of things. It discovers knowledge, not invents it. Invention is the adaptation of knowledge to human needs. But men seem to have the faculty of choice. Man abhors the idea of fatality to his will. And this abhorrence and the feeling of self-will, in all probability has a factual basis. Man's problem, then, is to reconcile his will with the inevitable, and this

can be done only when he understands the nature of the latter. So it is with social relations. It is for the individual to study and understand the laws of human association that promote initiative, responsibility, and harmony, and apply them to whatever *forms* of association he may find will most satisfactorily serve a given purpose. This can be done only when he can associate and disassociate at will—that is in a regime of liberty, or, if you prefer, anarchy. Man learns by trial and error, and these can have free play only in a free society, never, as far as the individual is concerned, in a governed society. Thus, social harmony can never be fully achieved pending the abolition of the State, and that should be the aim of every reform.

Progress consists in reconciling contradictions and social antagonisms for the purpose of equilibrium and harmony. It is no doubt a *conscious* process, and bears no stamp of determinism. Rather does the belief in a providential ameliorator, either in the form of fate or super-mundane intelligence, but retard the forward social movement.

#### 8. *On Economics*

One thing appears certain: liberty, as well as life itself, must stand on such an economic foundation as will not infringe on the opportunity for individual independence. For those who wield economic control hold all control, and no liberty is secure without, or is as important as, economic liberty. And “group control” will mean but group tyranny. The freedom of the individual must be exercised *at his own cost*. Only incompetents *preach* sacrifice; only fools practice it.

*As a science*, economics deals with the mutual relationships between men who are engaged in the production and distribution of wealth. *These relationships must be mutual*, that is, voluntarily agreed

upon, the *only other alternative* being arbitrary delegation of function and arbitrary distribution, determined by a ruling hierarchy. In the latter case, economic control departs from the interactions of free agreement and enters the field of despotic *whim*, and nothing is scientific or predictable, neither are the courses of action subject to rational social analysis. In this writer's view, all forms of collectivism, such as communism, socialism, the corporate state, as well as monopoly capitalism, admit no rationalization into principles of economic law, because that great controlling and equalizing factor—competition—has been either in whole or in part wiped out.

In life, principles which are experienced, perceived, and conceived are contradictory in the nature of their effects. Contradiction being fundamental and inevitable, the social problem becomes one of *reconciliation* and *equilibrium*. *The harmonious synthesis of opposites can be achieved only through liberty,—only freedom to discriminate and choose between the beneficial and harmful effects of these principles will solve the problem of social harmony.*

*Association* is not an organic law. Organization, in itself, is an evil in that it necessarily violates liberty which, because of the fundamental cause of the social problem—the nature of individuality—implies some degree of disassociation. If and as long as the individual is free to decide just how much liberty he wishes to cede in order to gain the benefits of association, his natural liberty has not been invaded. Thus, as collectivism and independence are antithetical, the social problem becomes not one of organization (or association), but one of mutuality, which arises *only* among free men when conditions permit of *acceptance* and *rejection*. *Social control, in a free society, is effected not from organic relationships, but from the ability to non-cooperate (boycott, for instance).*

*Competition* is the great force making for equilibrium and equity. Operating through the pressure of voluntary and independent or semi-independent productive groups which, as a whole, constitute a cooperative society, it regulates the division of labor, proportions production, socializes knowledge, spurs progress, and is the guarantee of independence. *With the rise of division of labor, the control of cooperation takes a different form from that of direct supervision, and this form is called competition.*

*Monopoly*, like property, in some forms or applications is an evil, that is, both a hindrance to production and a cause of maldistribution. Its essence is exclusion, an essential for independence, yet if indiscriminately applied violates liberty. *The purpose of monopoly should be to preserve independence without violating liberty.* Monopoly may also arise during the natural operation of economic law under liberty. But if and when it does, it is always subject to potential competition, which insures against its abuse. *Legal monopoly* leads immediately to corruption and exploitation.

### 9. *Property*

The idea of property arose as a necessary corollary to liberty, but a misuse of the principle to rights and circumstances in which its original and basic demands do not exist is the primary cause of the world's economic conflicts.

Property does *not* exist *because* products are the result of labor. Property is the expedient to guarantee the right of independence. Labor merely designates *who* is to be the proprietor of *what*. Even if wealth (rather say material goods) could be had without labor, even if it were superabundant, and although the instinct of possession would be considerably weakened because of the resulting security, the necessity for property would still exist

because *differences of opinion require separation and independence for the insurance of harmony*. Common ownership and difference of opinion leads to dissatisfaction, coercion, or a fight.

Men produce for *results*; the inconvenience of their failures should devolve on themselves, not others. Because concrete things can be used only by a limited number of persons, at one place, and at one time, a labor basis for property exists as a spur to *initiative*, and as an insurance of *responsibility*. To be free, the individual should be at liberty to act as he wills, but *at his own cost* (i.e., to the detriment of his own life and property). Common ownership involves such an indiscriminate sharing of benefits and penalties as would probably result in universal irresponsibility or mutual distrust (or what is more probable, either centralized or mob tyranny).

In the name of liberty, collectivistic proposals are advanced on the pretext that technological development has reached the stage where there may be proposed produced plenty for all. These proposals take two political forms: a society where productive and distributive arrangements are conducted by "technocrats", or rule from above on the order of the corporate state; and one ruled from the bottom as proposed by "communist-anarchists" whose law of economic distribution is "from each according to his ability to each according to his needs". In the latter, the stimulus to produce, it is claimed, would exist because man has so much energy which he must use up anyway, and because man is naturally "creative". Whatever merit this claim may possess, it fails to note the difference between work and play. Work is *necessity*, nearly always *irksome*, prompted by our *needs*; play is a *voluntary* pursuit, nearly always *non-productive*, prompted by our *desires*. Work should be paid for in its results; play is its own reward. No amount of



verbal quibbling by disguised egoists (such as “products are not individual but social”) will demolish this distinction. As soon as a departure is made from the basic law of *benefit proportional to effort, as a social principle*, the stimulus to produce begins to vanish. The paternalism of the family must be reversed in the economic relations between adults. Communism is indeed the philosophy of the child-minded.

10. *On Exchange: the concomitant of the division of labor*

As society advances through division of labor, the relations between individuals become increasingly dependent upon what division of labor implies—Exchange. Whosoever controls the issue or the terms of issue of circulating mediums, controls the relations which we have toward each other—controls the terms by which, and even if we may, exchange (i.e., cooperate) with one another. And by the use of such control, not only are we robbed of the fruits of our labor, but the control of the earth and everything therein is being rapidly monopolized by financiers.

Money, essentially credit money, is undoubtedly one of the greatest of cooperative discoveries. Without it no great specialization of labor seems possible, even under an all-inclusive state control of industry, and even here something of its nature would be necessary to maintain a check of and on consumption.

Governments have always, both directly and indirectly, mortgaged people to financial bandits. There is only one remedy, and that is the free opportunity of any individual or combination of individuals to issue money and credit instruments to any and all participants who will voluntarily accept them as an earnest for goods. And thus, through the free competition of both reputable and disreputable financings will the latter be crowded out by lack of patronage, and the interest-bearing

money, and the interest-bearing power of everything money will buy, be a thing of the past. No form of legally monopolized banking, the nature of things being what it is, will ever accomplish this end.

Perhaps the greatest menaces to individual liberty today are the numerous crack-brained governmental money reform schemes which have sprung into existence in the interim since the philosophy of liberty (designated anarchism) has been discredited by certain well-intentioned humanitarian zealots, who might well remember that "hell is paved with good intentions". However, whoever fails to understand the power of money, and also its utility and necessity, or fails to realize that the solution of the money problem is imperatively prior to and the fundamental solution of nearly all other social problems, fails to that extent in being an effective influence toward the advancement of the happiness and social well-being of mankind, and becomes not only a ridiculous utopian but an unwitting contributor to reaction in the opinion of those who have made a study of liberty in cooperation.

### 11. *On Value*

The concept of value arose *only* in the process of exchange. When two men come together to exchange things, they *evaluate* the relative importance of each article to themselves. If a rate of exchange is agreed upon, each article becomes the measure of value of the other. *The value of anything is what you can get for it.*

Social value exists only in an exchange economy, only in a competitive economy, only in a property economy. In order for a thing to have value, it must be the *property* of someone, and it must have *utility* to someone else who also has something desirable to exchange.

Value is a *human estimate*; it is *measured*

psychologically by a relation between the intensity of *desires and aversions*. The intensity of these desires and aversions has many influencing factors, and it is the study of these factors and how they influence the human mind, and by inference distribution, which is the fundamental subject matter of economics.

*Labor* is not an essential of value. A thing may have value without any labor having been involved in its ownership. But when, and insofar as, *free production* is in play, labor *becomes* a factor of value. The measure of value is settled by free agreement involving a complex balancing of desires (utility) and aversions (labor) by each of the parties concerned.

Value is not usually a fair basis for price. In equity, the price of commodities and services should be determined by their labor cost. Labor is “measured” by repugnance (not the time nor energy which are but factors of repugnance), and utility by benefits. Given free access to nature resources and to the prevailing productive knowledge, and free opportunities to exchange irrespective of national boundary lines, and freedom to use whatever money or credit facilities satisfactory to the parties involved, in short, *given a free economy, value approaches cost of production*, when it may be said that the value of a product is measured by the *utility of the labor* necessary to produce it.

Values are not and cannot be determined in production. It is only in the process of exchange that the utility factor is noted, as values are ascertained by mutual agreement. It takes *at least two coinciding* opinions, those of producer and consumer, for value to exist in fact.

Values are “socially determined” *only* under the influence of competition, *when there are several* producers and several buyers of the thing in question.

There is no “socially determined” value when an article is produced by monopoly, for in such a case the competition which socializes the progress in productive efficiency has been suppressed. Money values (prices) rise and fall under the influence of supply and demand, thereby affecting the remuneration of producers in such a manner as to impel them to gravitate to the most remunerative industry, thus both proportioning effort to social need and, through competition, achieving equity in compensation for productive effort.

Values are continually changing due to changes in desire (style, custom, opinion, etc.) and changing technological development which reflects upon the ease of accomplishing results. *Given freedom*, the less *human* labor the less the value.

An idea of the complexity of value estimates may be had by considering some of the influencing factors:—Material, judgment, risk, time, energy, personal inclinations, (individual initiative and individual responsibility are valuable qualities of human service), these affect value from the productive standpoint (i.e., labor or the aversion factor); scarcity, artistic considerations, personal and social estimates, sex, ambition, emulation, habit, custom, tradition, style, religion, time, place, climate, topography, durability, etc., affect value from the consumer’s standpoint (i.e., the utility or desire factor).

A fairly firm grasp on the significance and the effect of the influences determining value is *essential* for understanding the apportionment which obtains in a freely competitive economy. It may be said with certainty that it is the influence of law-made economic restrictions which are the basic causes of inequity and human exploitation.

## 12. *On Government and Law*

It is monopoly created by law; it is competition

suppressed by law; it is law, law, law and government—how can this truism be impressed into the stupid heads of those who are perpetually clamoring for laws, censorships, prohibitions—that create the damnable conditions in society. Law and Government! Investigate the nature of these frauds. Liberty vs. law and government: This is the problem for suffering humanity to study and in which it must make a decision. Perhaps the greatest social aphorism ever uttered was that of Proudhon:

*Liberty, not the Daughter, but the Mother of Order.*

One thing may be well to keep in mind: *Every movement resorting to the State as a way out of man's predicament is but accelerating a drift the resultant of which is what is currently termed Fascism.* And I believe the road is not hampered by misguided humanitarians who deem collectivism a solution and who expect to achieve their aims through a “revolution” in which they expect to “take over the means of production”. Without well-defined aims for the immediate future, yet tempered by expediency, the present turn of events becomes highly problematical. For while there is always a possibility for the better, history shows also a possibility for something decidedly worse.

### 13. *Anarchism*

Society is in process of formation, one might say also of organization. Anarchism is not a *condition*, but is a *force* or *tendency* making for liberty during this formation period. *Anarchy* might be said to be a *state of liberty* toward which society aims, but *anarchism* should be considered as the *dynamic force* moving always in that direction. With this view of terms the following expression, “there is less liberty today than formerly, but there is more anarchism”, becomes intelligible and illuminating.

A utopian is one who attempts to do something without full knowledge of the facts involved. A

utopian is usually looking for a *condition*; he expects society to “arrive” somewhere. Many, probably most, anarchists *are* utopian, in more senses than one. But anarchism is not utopian, neither is it “scientific” except as a method; *it is a fact of life*. Anarchism is the force, will, instinct (call it what you will) that tends to free the individual from mass control.

In one sense, and unfortunately, anarchism is not, and never will be, a *mass movement*. Its pivotal strength will ever be a minority, and the further on the progressive road they be, the smaller will be that minority. The mass-minded man is usually a wrecker and a despot. We plainly see the latter type in the dictatorships of today, which are creating havoc with the human spirit and despoiling the hopes, aspirations and enthusiasms of men. Every demagogue is an altruist who promises succor to the mass—those incredulous believers in altruism.

The ideal of anarchism, being a voluntary society, obviously cannot be attained through violence, not through civil war (these are extraneous to anarchy itself), but will, however, necessarily come through rebellion and flouting the prevailing conditions and mores. The libertarian revolution is a revolution of the spirit, advancing when and as men awaken to assert themselves *as men*, i.e., as Supermen, over and above any that have heretofore existed on this planet. But this may be incomprehensible metaphysics to the materialist.

Anarchists are nearly always optimists in that they will ever believe that, whatever the conditions may be at the moment, *more* liberty is always possible.

#### 14. *On Communism*

A “science” that becomes effective, in practice, only by the use of guns, bayonets, and prisons. And by the sweeping aside of the Magna Carta that had been wrestled from authority only after years of

summary indictments and punishments. I suppose *it* is “bourgeois” like many of the other hardly-fought-for civilizing forces of society!

The fallacy of combination as a social principle may be readily seen even in the institution of marriage. Legal and religious marriage is a form of mutual monopoly, often involuntary, hence tyrannical. So with all involuntary unions. The only “out” is to supplant combination by separation, and by making liberty and competition (natural selection) the controlling social forces.

By adopting communism or the indiscriminate sharing of benefits and penalties *as an economic principle* is to put incompetency on par with incompetency. Thus will another form of aristocracy be laid upon society—the aristocracy of incompetency. Another proof that communism is the philosophy of incompetents. There is one merit to the proposal, however, in that such an aristocracy will be so easy to enter. The result will be what is the unconscious aim of society—equality—but the equalizing process will be—DOWN. The salvation of the world does not lie in substituting one form of parasitism for another.

“Rights” are *granted*; “duties” are *enforced*. To speak of rights and duties is to think in terms of authority. Beware of the demagogue who speaks of your rights, for he will soon be eager to impose duties upon you.

Destroy the individual and you destroy society; but if society is disbanded tomorrow individuals would continue to exist. When will the herd instinct with its consequent political superstition vanish from the human mind!

## Regarding the "Libertarian Socialist League"

*[Comments on Melchior Seele's criticism of the Manifesto issued  
by the Libertarian Socialist League (See Man! Dec 1938, Feb  
1939, April 1939)]*

### **What's in a name—or— much ado about nothing**

Schopenhauer somewhere says that you can tell how contented a person is by what he complains of. I am reminded of his thought in seeing an able writer like Melchior Seele criticise the manifesto issued by the Libertarian Socialist League, indicating, evidently, that the cause of anarchy is sailing along happily. Yet some interesting points have been raised in discussing whether the members of that league are anarchists or not. Possibly the name they have chosen, with all its ambiguity, more aptly fits them than the term 'anarchist'. Be this as it may, debating it is not the purpose of these lines, but rather to comment upon Point 1 of the manifesto, dealing with organization, upon which Mr. Seele elaborately dwells.

It may be an improvement, as Seele contends, for clarity in discussion, to use the term 'organization' to mean authoritarian types of union, and 'association' for freely formed bodies. But such usage must be agreed upon by the parties discussing the subject. In the sense which Seele uses the word 'organization' whereby men are considered things to be moved willy nilly as pawns of superiors, obviously such could or would not exist in a genuine anarchist society. But while this may be the usual connotation understood by the term, it is quite certain that the members of the league did not mean it in that sense, although their plans might involve conditions being that way. It does not seem completely fair to ascribe authoritarianism to the league, if the wording alone



of their manifesto be considered. Fact is, it hardly admits of interpretation. After all the discussion presumably engaged in, the result,—the manifesto—is little more than a mass of ambiguous generalities, worthy of politicians, probably demonstrating the vacuity of thought of its promulgators, and meaning to the outside reader almost anything he wishes to read into it. Criticising it requires temerity. Seele's merit, in my opinion, is in his effort to steer the anarchist movement clear of windy nothings, acceptable to anyone and everyone, even to a Roosevelt.

Basic questions are involved. They are: who is to do what, when, where, and how. The manifesto does not seem even aware of them; Seele does not tackle them nor does he avoid them by switching to the term 'association'. It would have been much better had he explained the difference by which functions are allotted in 'organizations' and 'associations'. Neither does Seele avoid the questions by saying that things are to be organized, rather than men. Things, that is, products and productive instruments, do not exist apart from men. Separate a man from his products and his machines and you soon have a nullity; the connection between a man and the things necessary for his livelihood is natural and unavoidable—the union of man and things is inevitable. And if things are to be organized, I say that the men owning or controlling these things will likewise be organized.

The issue between Seele and the league boils down to his objection to a manifesto which says nothing and promises everything, its avoidance of the word anarchism, and the use of the word organization as an accessory to the accomplishment of its ideal. Really, there is little else in the manifesto that could be criticised. The important things were left unsaid.

As Seele notes, the herd type of mind thinks in terms of flocks, as though the individual man exists

only to form organizations, groups, unions, cooperatives. Now whether 'associated' or 'organized', a man can be free only to make compromises. He must consider others; he must give and take. He may be impelled to do something he doesn't like, in order to acquire something he does like. If the total satisfaction is greater than the total pain, so will he act. The individual's will can have full sway only to the extent in which he is alone and independent. Hence, in most idealistic writings, especially if of a libertarian nature, there is, significantly, an almost studied avoidance of or slurring over basic problems. The confronting difficulty, as I see it, is that nearly all of such writers are searching for or trying to formulate an organizational (or associational) system for Society. Yet, on the other hand, there are some who, as Mr. Seele, realizing this is an impossibility while also maintaining freedom, go to the extreme of denying organization as a principle in, as well as for, society. Both seem to be stumped by an enigma.

Whether called 'association' or 'organization', these questions do arise: who is to do what, when, where, and how. In society as a whole, these questions are settled by competition. But in associational activity, other methods must be resorted to.

It should be clearly recognized, as the first axiom of sociology, that no social problem at all arises until the emergence of difference of opinion. There are no questions dealing with human relations, that is, no social in contradistinction to technological problems, where men agree upon a method of procedure. The social problem is fundamentally to discover a method of settling differences and coming to agreements. Naturally, there is no universal method of reconciling differences, except the last resort—the agreement

to disagree. And where no specific method can prevail, the only recourse is independent activity, not associative activity. This is a point which many of the prominent anarchists themselves failed to see. The most notable exceptions were Proudhon, Stirner, and Warren. And independent activity, where mutualism or the exchange of products by free agreement, prevails, implies competition. It is when one individual or group can do things his or their way, and other individuals and groups do things other ways, and exchange in a free market, that the best methods, those which produce the most and best with the least effort, continually crowd the less satisfactory methods out of existence. This is why and how competition, when free, is, in the broadest and largest sense (i.e. in the societal sense), cooperative. And this is the answer to socialistic nitwits who propose to outlaw competition as a preliminary to establishing a “cooperative commonwealth” or similar planned economies. Five minutes talk with communists and other collectivists who aspire to abolish private property (without qualifications) and abolish exchange (to establish “free distribution”) will show just how much they believe in liberty.

Will there be communist associations in a free society? It is quite possible. Labor syndicates controlling production and disposition through representatives? Why not. Stock companies? More than likely. Individually owned enterprises? Assuredly.

But a free society is not a communist society, nor a syndicalist, stock company or any other society having as its basis any particular organizational form. Rather will it be composed of all the forms imaginable.

Would one be understood if he said he was an anarchist in the broadest sense, and a monarchist, oligarchist, aristocrat, democrat, etc. even plutocrat

in the smaller sense?—meaning that he wanted anarchy for society, but for individuals who voluntarily organize themselves he had no particular plan, indeed believed all kinds of plans have their places?

As an instance, a public meeting would do well in having a chairman who may be an absolute autocrat as far as indicating who shall have the floor, when and how long he shall speak, and for the purpose of confining the discussion to the issues. Otherwise there would likely to be a tower of Babel. Such a chairman should, of course, be chosen for his judiciousness, fairness and tact, or his ability to abide by predetermined rules.

Again, why shouldn't the plutes, those who put up wealth for any enterprise, have deciding power. It is understood, of course, that by their wealth in this instance is meant their legitimately acquired goods, the results of their labors or an equivalent thereof acquired by free exchange. In all fairness, he who pays the piper is entitled to call the tune. Those who do not like the tune need not belong.

An aristocracy may mean that decisions were in the hands of the wisest; a democracy that deciding power rested with a majority, and so forth.

These examples may give an idea of what Proudhon meant when he said that principles could not be abolished in this world, but that the problem was to discover the philosophy of things—when, where, and how principles were to be applied. He also said that association was not an organic law, meaning that no particular form of organization was applicable for society. Principles have contrary effects, depending upon how, when, and for what purpose they are applied. What may be good for one purpose may be out of place for another.

The world has tried monarchism, hierarchical, representative, and other methods of organization for coming to decisions. They are all useful,

depending upon the nature of what is to be accomplished and the time and means for accomplishing them. For example, it is perhaps evident enough that, for the purpose of getting things done, a monarchical or dictatorial form of organization is most efficient. The defect is that what is to be done, and how, are positively out of the hands of the doers, but resides only with the dictators themselves. This is slavery in its most complete form when applied irrespective of the wills of the individuals organized. The great error is that these methods were considered societary rather than organizational principles. Mankind as a herd, the basis of communism and of governments, was at the bottom of all their applications. Thus, the State is "the embodiment of the principle of invasion in an individual, or band of individuals, assuming to act as representatives or masters of all the people within a given area." That is to say that the supposed or pretended collective expression, the State, attempted to organize a society by considering men as "things", as Seele has expressed and explained it. But society should not be organized, only left free. Individuals, however, may organize themselves on any principle or combination of principles upon which they may agree.

It is a greivous and fatal error, in my estimation, to search for organizational principles for society. Yet that, really, is what just about 99/100ths of all reformers and revolutionists are endeavouring to do. Communism, syndicalism, and schemes proposed to operate through a government are organizational schemes good enough, perhaps, for those who want to try these forms, but absolutely tyrannical when applied to society at large. Mutualism is a method of exchange relations between individuals or groups, each organized upon whatever plan seeming to them good, but

who are not otherwise organized or associated. An anarchistic society will by its very definition be mutualistic, but it will not be communistic, syndicalistic or any society based on any particular form of economic organization.

The opinions herein expressed may, I trust, throw some light on the problem which confronts society in its quest for liberty. The Implications are that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the forms of industrial organization existing at the present time, but only the application of any particular form to such an organization as the State as defined in this article. The economic phase of the social problem does not deal in forms of organization, but in the relation of individuals to natural resources, and the exchange of their products. That is to say, it deals with land and money (credit).

Men do not, like bees and ants, act altogether instinctively, without reflection. They are neither automats nor alike, but vary in likes, needs, opinions and capabilities. When organized, or associated, the less proficient will naturally and freely take orders from the more proficient. Mr. Seele's loose references to 'equality' also deserve discussion, for the purpose of clarity. There is no merit whatever in refusing to face biological facts. {I do not wish this to be misconstrued to be a reference to racism, but merely as it applies to individuals.})

The more capable, by whatever means found satisfactory, will be placed in positions of trust, responsibility, and direction—tacitly or by written agreement. I believe this is obvious enough to those who are not wilfully blind to the facts of life. Whatever these means shall be, whether by individual assumption, majority vote, unanimous decision or otherwise, so long as the parties to the agreement act voluntarily, no anarchist can say. But if, on the contrary, he aspires to deny any of these

particular methods, he goes too far and oversteps the bounds where liberty allows specifications. If I understand him correctly (and if I do not I hope he will put me right) I believe Mr. Seele is mistaken when he flatly denies a hierarchical form of association as a permissible principle of associative endeavor in an anarchist society. When Mr Seele condemns hierarchy as a principle for society, he is in the right; but if he condemns it as a principle which may be perhaps usefully resorted to by voluntarily associated individuals, I believe he is grossly mistaken. There is not objection to a Stalin, a Mussolini, a Hitler or a Roosevelt for those who are willing to abide by their decisions; there is a great objection to such as these when they pretend to speak for a nation or for anyone who may think, like this writer, that they are preposterous hypocrites and ignoramouses, and further, criminals when they consent to use the coercive power of the State to enforce their decisions. Likewise are those schemes which propose to use the coercive power of the State for their enforcement criminal in intent.

Any form of association is a despotism if the individual cannot secede if he wishes; no form of organization is a despotism to him who voluntarily belongs to it. What business is it of others to decide how people are to conduct their affairs? The test of understanding is the ability to make specifications, but it also includes the knowledge of where specification is not permissible, or doubtful. Lack of specification is the weak and fatal point of the manifesto of the Libertarian Socialist League.

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## Anarchy and Competition (notes from an unfinished manuscript)

1. What a heroic task a radical assumes! Does he not try to induce people to think to their discomfort; to change another's ideas, a formidable undertaking; to arouse from apathy men's self-respect and independence, with imperceptible results? Furthermore, must not a rebel penetrate the mass of social, or rather *unsocial*, superstitions impregnated in men's minds? And for the attempt bears not only the brunt of cordial hatred of the 'powers-that-be' but also risks the condemnation of the very dupes he endeavors to benefit? Such is the lot of the anarchist. The difficulty of expounding individualism is caused by the woeful lack of self-reliance and responsibility in men and by the prevalence of collectivistic<sup>1</sup> thought. Paternalism is in the air. A shallow but pernicious pretense of altruism today has the ascendancy and egoism is on the ban.

2. A revolutionary philosophy interspersed with sentimentalism is more apt to make converts than a sound doctrine stated baldly and unemotionally. What most hampers the anarchist movement is the number of enthusiasts, idealists, and utopian dreamers in its ranks. Man's natural desire for freedom explains the aspirations of people who sustain their hopes more by wish-thoughts rather than by proven knowledge of the workability of liberty.

The widespread disparagement of competition comes from a belief it has anti-social tendencies. It is thought that competition makes society factious, dispossesses the incompetent, and causes an

<sup>1</sup> By collectivism, throughout this article, is meant compulsory cooperative organization.



undesirable concentration of wealth and power. Careful analysis proves this view to be a strange *inversion* of the truth.

### **The Philosophy of Competition**

1. The primary causes of progress are laziness, curiosity, dissatisfaction and desire, and competition. Every invention and improvement in production testifies to man's eternal effort to avoid work. Curiosity is the germ motivating experimental science. Dissatisfaction and desire, springing from experience and imagination, prompt reform. Competition is the effort of man to excel so as to merit approbation and patronage.

2. The economic and social tenets of Anarchism are so inseparably coupled with the competitive principle that liberty and free competition are unthinkable, one without the other. In fact, Anarchism involves such a general adoption of competition that it may fairly be said to be the gist of anarchist methods. There are, of course, those in every movement to whom the use of stock phrases and revolutionary mottoes take the place of ideas. In all socialistic literature there have been few attempts to scientifically define terms. To do so would be to make obvious the absurdities into which it is unfortunately enmeshed. For example, there are collectivists of shades of political belief whom the word cooperation soothes and to whom competition brings a shudder. Cooperation means working together. But men cooperate for many purposes. They may cooperate to fleece others in the manner of present-day enterprises. They may even cooperate to kill others as in war. Men may voluntarily cooperate or be compelled to cooperate. Obviously there are *methods* of cooperating, as voluntary or compulsory; and there are *aims* for

cooperating, as invasive or non-invasive. Men may voluntarily cooperate either for invasion or defense. Likewise, they may be compelled to cooperate to invade, or resist an invasion. In this light, the blind idolatry of “cooperation” becomes ridiculous. It all depends on how and what for.

3. Anarchism is the doctrine that each individual should have the greatest amount of liberty compatible with like liberty for all others. This excludes invasion, which to the anarchist means any forcible curtailing of liberty.

4. Competition is the effort of two or more persons to serve others by offering more favorable results. No more than cooperation is competition invasive because the winner of any freely competitive contest has not aggressed on the *liberty* of others attempting to do the same. Only when one restricts the liberty of others, by *forcibly suppressing* competition, can his conduct be invasive. (For he thereby denies anyone who thinks he has a better method of doing things from demonstrating, at his own cost & responsibility, whether he has or not.)

5. Anarchism aims to abolish arbitrary power backed by political violence, i.e., the State. A free society rests on natural selection and in Anarchy choice (in production and exchange, in sexual mating, and in all cooperative enterprises and associations) is made by individuals themselves, and not by a political body using coercion to enforce its mandates. Anarchists look forward to the time when every organization or institution in society must prove its right to exist by bidding for the voluntary support of members in society, maintaining such existence in consonance with other freely competing individuals or groups. Bidding the time until social

conditions and men's intelligence preclude predatory and anti-social traits, anarchists do not hesitate to apply their doctrine to protective associations.

Should community defense be considered necessary some individuals will offer their services to those willing to pay for them. But should protective organizations be considered unnecessary, naturally, lack of demand will cause subscriptions to decline and protectors may even dwindle to extinction; in like manner, organizations of all sorts will spring into existence and expire in response to the demands of a healthy social body. Invasiveness is least probable when organizational activity is supported, not by compulsory taxation, but by voluntary subscriptions which may be immediately cut off the moment when, for any reason, merit & benefits are lacking. Man learns by experience and experiment which demands freedom and not a regime of coercion and law. For, in all places and at all times, law is a rigid system of rules and regulations that necessarily serves to maintain special groups in privilege and power.

It is true that anarchists have implied faith in the propriety of conduct of men not coerced, and consider it futile to attempt to persuade individuals who, in ignorance, posit *as a principle* man's natural depravity, and his stupidity and reluctance to support without compulsion any institution that may be beneficial to him. A scientifically organized society allows the greatest latitude for individual initiative and experimentation, not to have science monopolized by bureaucratic officialdom. Liberty has no need for "officials" because it is not an officious principle.

6. Without a distinction between defense and offense no science of society is possible. There is no valid, social pretext for interfering with non-invasive

conduct, irrespective of what its effects may be on voluntary participants. We have no just right to force a man to not be *asocial*, as he pleases, in fact, it is one phase of his right of being asocial, i.e., the right of boycott, taboo, ostracism, and non-cooperation, which is the only legitimate and non-invasive method of social control. In one sense, anarchism may be considered as being, not the abolition of government, but the generalizing of its principle by decentralizing it or putting it into the hands of those immediately concerned. Patronage is a method of voting which carries with it the “initiative, referendum, and recall” as immediate alternatives. (We cooperate directly with those with whom we agree) Equal freedom implies equal opportunities to patronize or to compete for patronage. It is obvious that men can never have this kind of control—free choice for those concerned—as long as the State lasts. For the State rests on monopoly and coercion—the theory that a man or group of men has the right to enforce mandates purportedly advanced to be for the benefit of everyone.

7. When asked whether they subscribe to competition or monopoly, our collectivist friends are utterly at sea, unwittingly oblivious that the production and exchange of wealth must be carried on under either or both of these categories. They seem unable to discern that these are but two aspects of the same thing, for, in one view, all competitors, considered collectively, may be thought of as having a monopoly of their particular field.

8. Now it is obvious that men, who cannot possibly live in isolation, must cooperate in some way. The mistake made by our squeamish collectivist friends is their failure to perceive that competition

and cooperation are not antithetical but coinciding concepts. It is correct to say both that “we cooperate to compete” and “we compete to cooperate”. If men want to cooperate to organize society efficiently and harmoniously, they must do so by allowing free play to competition, which is but another term for natural selection, a term which has been limited in thought to apply only to economic fields. Competition must be allowed to freely operate in every walk of life, in association and disassociation; in the fields of belief; thought; speech; press; education, and love; as well as in the economic realms of production and exchange. Competition leaves monopoly subject to the limitations of the advance of knowledge and regulated by equal opportunities, without which competition is not free and such suppression constitutes the *legal* creation of monopoly. Whether such a monopoly is called a trust or a commune does not alter the fact that non-invasive (and probably progressive) individuals or groups have no other alternative than to submit to denials of independent judgment, i.e., of individualistic production. Competition is the factor in the organization of society by which—through secession—individuality, difference of opinion, variation, and liberty are retained in a cooperative society. Were it not for the fact that competition and cooperation are fundamentally identical, association and free difference of opinion—cooperation and liberty—could never be combined.

9. Competition means two or more endeavoring to achieve a common end, and when this common aim is the patronage of third parties, voluntarily choosing, we have a system of social control wherein each party retains his individuality, his freedom, and a responsibility which he alone must answer for. This situation needs no statute law to interfere,

indeed, law cannot interfere without privileging one of the parties. The question resolves into: Are men to be prevented to better serve their fellows according to their own light? Can it be affirmed that by so doing the less resourceful have been restricted in producing for themselves or in exchanging with others less efficient, in other lines of endeavor? Must the results of the superior be forcibly taken from them to recompense the inferior for his incapacity? Collectivists (socialists, communists, etc.) often deny that they subscribe to an authoritarian philosophy and attempt to hide this fact under the guise of duty and humanitarianism—others openly espouse it in the name of necessity.

10. Some communists say that their ultimate goal is anarchism, but as anarchism is based on voluntary agreement how is the division of labor to be made in “free communist” society? Is it to be assumed that there will be unanimous agreement about who is to do what? Are the relative amounts of things needed to be determined by bureaus? If so, how are these bureaus to be chosen? Who is to decide methods of production? Who is to say who the experimenters, inventors, innovators, and teachers are to be? Who is to determine the state of efficiency of things? Before assuming plenty for all, this plenitude must be assured! If unanimous agreement is not forthcoming what is to be done with the several differing groups? O.K., there’s the rub! Regardless of intent, their beautiful declarations are so many utopian prayers. Individualism solves these difficulties by the free competition of all. But communists, by denying private property and competition either leave them to be determined by authority or leave their solution hanging in the air. Their condemnations of private property, competition, and the wage system evince their ignorance of the

nature and cause of exploitation and, strange to say, the very nature of liberty itself. The wage system, *per se*, implies a system of distribution by voluntary contract. *In itself*, there is no element that, as commonly supposed, implies a desire for exploitation by either party. Nor, when equal opportunity is maintained, *can* there be any probability for exploitation to occur. For in the absence of exploitation privileges, the laborer will cease to be the dispossessed and property-less person which he is today not because of competition, but because of the absence of it. When the legal monopolization of opportunities is abolished, the laborer soon becomes a possessor and when it is optional whether he become an employer or employee, competition for hired labor will be balanced by competition of laborers for jobs. The property-less man is at a disadvantage fatal to his interests. He is *proletarianized* because the supply of labor is now always greater than the demand, a condition arising because economic privilege concentrates wealth into fewer hands and so prevents an even distribution of wealth.

11. "Anarchist-communists" are one type of collectivist whose error rests not so much on their aims as on their assumptions. Their conception of the organization of society rests on a consensus of opinion, the absence of which is one basic reason for the desirability of Anarchy. They follow in the footsteps of Marxians in condemning private property, competition, and the wage system but naively believe that men will voluntarily give them up. This utopianism may be scouted. As long as freedom to choose exists, difference of opinion will divide individuals and groups who will, implicitly or explicitly, bid for mutuality and cooperation. This, of course, is competition, which to be free necessitates private property. If it is assumed that voluntary communism is feasi-

ble, the question arises why men do not so organize production now. There is nothing preventing men from organizing enterprises on “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” now. The difference between compulsion and liberty is precisely the difference between communism and stock companies. Communism means joint and *inseparable* ownership; stock companies, joint and *separable* ownership. In the latter one retains his independence. Why is it that men do not subscribe to the communistic type of organization, but *do* subscribe to stock companies, wherein each may sell his portion of ownership, thereby seceding, and take his wealth and join another organization more to his liking? This is impossible under communism, because the denial of a specific portion of ownership constitutes it as a compulsory cooperative group.

12. A competent organization necessitates competition through which incompetency is crowded out. Hence the communist, a hater of competition, proves by his emotional antipathy his admission of incompetency. Psychologically, communism is based on the inferior man’s fear and hatred of the superior. This is probably an atavistic attitude coming from a time when scarcity promoted strife in the acquirement of the then insufficient necessities of life. This is not to say that all communists are actually incompetents. Their incompetency may consist only in their failure to see that the implications of their philosophy are based on a pernicious inversion of the truth. While there may be several social enterprises especially adapted to common ownership, this fact is, in the nature of things, as much to be rued as rejoiced over.

13. Authoritarian communists think they have solved the problems of purification of government



by the abolition of private property. "One man can only eat and wear so much," they triumphantly exclaim, though what this proves is difficult to see. It surely applies as well under the present regime. Their fallacy lies in limiting man to just a consuming apparatus to be delivered enough fuel to keep up activity. Man, to such individuals, seems to be nothing but a phallus appended to an alimentary canal. Will despotism cease because of a possible (though not probable) forcible equalization of incomes? Is it not idle to discuss with persons to whom the concepts justice, freedom, and honor are incomprehensible and hence metaphysical? These they condemn as "bourgeois" concepts. They change the terms of their moral code, bourgeois meaning "bad" and proletarian "good". To those who take the position that everything in life is expressed in sex and food—prudence, curiosity, the will to power, the will to knowledge, and genuine social consciousness are meaningless. One has but to point out that the greatest gourmards and the most sensual have offered very little to progress and that the greatest thinkers and humanitarians were generally most temperate and even ascetic to confute this pig philosophy.

14. The fallacy of trying to reform the world by preaching and exhortation alone should be obvious by the failure of 2000 years of christianity. True, its interpretations have been mostly bogus and hypocritical, but enough remains of its real nature to prove this. The philosophy of being my brother's keeper must be replaced by the ethic that one must not prey upon his brothers but let them alone to accomplish their own "salvation". But even this is not enough. The realization of the fundamental law of self-interest must replace the false and weakening beliefs in the paternal interest of external agencies.

Sociability cannot be **forced**, it must come about by such an economic change as will promote it. "Sociability" achieved in any other way becomes hypocrisy.

15. Collectivism is a "crowd-minded" doctrine. To those who have ever been losers in the unequal, privileged, and despotic struggle for existence, who have not felt the glory and the satisfaction of conquering obstacles and the achievement of aims, the thought of peace and security is soothing and endearing. Nevertheless, life is essentially a struggle, and peace, in a sense, stagnation and death. We say of the dead that they are at peace.

The desire for peace is motivated by fear and lack of confidence. The social problem is to set the stage for an unprivileged struggle. Responsibility is vastly preferable to the peace of paternalism which is nothing but the fostering of unfitness. "Brotherly love" is often motivated by crowd-mindedness and mutual aid conceived as the nursing of incompetency. These are the shibboleths of the "everybody has a right to live" and the "what about poor me" man, the man who lacks confidence and aggressiveness and is afraid to stand out alone but prefers to be one of the crowd. He loves doles, old age pensions, and unemployment insurance, stupidly putting charity in place of justice, knowing very little of either. Of the joiner type, he dreads liberty because of the responsibility and vigilance it entails. He has antipathy toward Nietzschean philosophy with its "war of all against all", the free clash of opinion against opinion, the competitive battle of wits and endeavors. Instead of innumerable attempts, successes and failures, achievements and defeats, made by responsible parties, he prefers the "we must all hang together" philosophy. But paradoxically, this war of all against all, this clash of opinion against opinion, contrary to popular belief,

helps the very ones whose opinions have met defeat by their rejection by society. Competitors are cooperators who are endeavoring to find the best and most efficient methods of social service, leaving the public, or any portion thereof, with its voice as patronizer, to be the arbiter and judge to accept or discard as it wills.

16. The motives of men cannot be assumed to be consciously directed for social betterment but for individual betterment. Free competition becomes a beneficial force unconsciously, and the affluence it will bring automatically brings about a diminution of the struggle for existence thereby giving opportunity for self-centeredness to relax and an opportunity for the observation and sympathy of our neighbor's plight. However, whether the motives for competing be that of hate or love, the results are the same. What a man's motives are is not so important. It is the *effects* of his actions that count. Socialists and communists are certainly humanitarian in motive, but, unfortunately, their aims would affect the worst form of bureaucratic tyranny the world has ever known. For such would be the effects of centralized authority backed by arbitrary power to enforce its commands.

17. Competition being the essence of liberty, the marvelous results of competition can be comprehended only by the study of its effects. Without liberty and competition, progress is retarded and slavery results. It is appropriate, therefore, to survey the effects of competition on different phases of social life.

It is the unfortunate connection of utopian nonsense to anarchism, of which Proudhon was the founder, that has killed the genuine article for the last quarter of a century.

"All belongs to all" is a beautiful (and meaning-

less) expression, and I know that the prospect of doing what one wants and taking what one needs from the public trough is an enticing thought, but opposition to the State because it prevents such indiscrimination is puerile indeed.

### **The Application of Competition**

1. Advocates of *free speech* reason that an opinion heretofore silenced may be true, or, if not totally true, may contain an important element of truth necessary to amend an accepted truth; or even if false its expression is necessary to keep existing truths alive and realized and to prevent them from falling into parroted but unrealized phrases. The impossibility of getting any infallible group in society to pronounce judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition militates against the feasibility of permitting any group to stopple the mouths of others. One may not believe in or agree with another expounding a philosophy, ism, religion or opinion, but one may want to hear it and should resent the impudence of anything decreeing what must or must not be spoken. To deny anyone from listening to another man is either to insult his intelligence or is prompted by the decree to keep him ignorant. Strange spectacle, always noticeable, when the most ignorant attempt to or actually do prohibit the free speech of others. Every authoritative censorship board is made of such domineering ignoramus. Difference of opinion is necessary to progress for the various opinions may be different aspects of the same thing which need reconciliation. This phase of anarchistic thought has been well covered in "On Liberty" by John Stuart Mill. It is pertinent to our subject to note that every effort to advance a new opinion or an old opinion in a new light is nothing less than *competition* in expression which must be free not only to insure progress but to allow free

individual growth. Allied liberties are free thought, free assembly, freedom of the press, and unregistered expression and exhibition of all artistic efforts.

2. Freedom of *education* has similar salubrious effects. Following the increase in individual wealth which the abolition of government and its concomitant exploitation privileges will bring about, anarchists propose the abolition of compulsory education and the establishment of freely competitive schools. Each school must rely on its merits for patronage. Variety, both in educational quality and content, will make an immediate and effective measurement for determining the worth of each. Inefficiency and incompetency will be crowded out. Indoctrination and “training” will be done away with. Competition is the method by which society forms its division of labor in the order of effectiveness and ability, yet it does so without any authoritative decrees and without denying the individual right of choice and employment.

3. Proposing *free love* causes horror to those whose minds are perverted by the idea of contemporary “civilization”. Yet to ask whether they prefer free or compulsory love makes palpable their crass stupidity. The truth is that there is but one kind of love and that *is* free love. Dupes of the Church and State, institutions that attempt to compel people to remain together whether they love one another or not, do not comprehend this. Legal and religious marriage—system of mutual slavery, of hypocrisy and legalized prostitution—are a state of affairs that makes us miserable and degenerate. Anarchists want to abolish all this. They believe in free love, in free *competition* in love if you please. What a stimulus such a condition will give toward beautifying the love and friendship relations

between the sexes may be imagined. No man could retain the respect and love of a woman without treating her in a tolerable manner. Likewise no woman could retain a man while remaining a termagant or a slouch. Each individual would put on his mettle to maintain himself or herself in the best possible condition—physically, mentally, and morally—in order to merit the respect of others. There would be no legal chains holding people together. Boycott and ostracism may be the strongest lessons to individuals who fall much below the general level of culture. Natural selection would be reestablished. The abolition of government, here as elsewhere, would lead to an unprivileged society wherein each reaped what he had earned.

4. But of most importance is the production and exchange of wealth wherein free competition will greatly aid in attaining all other benefits. For competition to be free, each individual has to have as equal an opportunity of access to natural resources as is possible in the nature of things, free use of the productive knowledge and freedom to exchange when, where, to whom, and on whatever terms he pleases. Products and services will in general exchange in proportion to the respective amounts of equally arduous labor involved.

5. Under liberty both competition and monopoly are natural. As each individual may be considered to have a monopoly of his peculiar talents, so may all shoemakers possess a monopoly. But competition may exist within this monopoly; monopoly is subject to potential competition. It is only when competition is hampered by law or when monopoly results from law-created privileges, which is the same thing, that exploitation arises. Under freedom, monopoly maintains its position by

efficiency and merit and not on privilege. And competition, if not actual, is always potential. It is only thus that a sound division of labor can come about and exploitation be abolished. Under liberty (free competitive choice), organization of production may proceed in this order—secession, explanation of project, subscription of capital, and competition with other enterprises for wage labor. This process can continue interminably. In the absence of privilege—when the wage worker is also property owner—when it is optional with him whether to use his capital for hire or not to risk it in an enterprise the success of which to him seems doubtful, a balance is maintained between supply and demand for wage labor which will virtually eliminate exploitation.

6. Apart from the ethical beliefs of exchanging parties which may affect the rates of exchange (the effects of which are highly debatable), men try to get the most for the least effort. As long as every man has an equal opportunity to satisfy his desires, hampered only by his native capacity to do so either individually or in association, he will not pay for any article more, in effort, than that which it would naturally take him to produce it. Individual property rights in the products of labor are necessary to insure the existence of difference of opinion and free choice as factors in the production and exchange of wealth. Personal possession is the primary urge of production and is the best insurance of the care of wealth after it is produced. The collectivist's condemnation of private property is due to an incorrect analysis of the nature of exploitation. Reasoning about phenomena occurring amid several contributing factors, they attribute the effective cause of exploitation to factors which are merely incidental. Examples enough show that their condemnation of private property

and competition rather than the *conditions under which competition operates* land them into absurdities. The Puritan's condemnation of sex, the Marxian's hatred of liberty, the Prohibitionist's fear of beer are similar to the communist's castigations of private property, competition, and the wage system. Common property may have existed when men had but to take the products of nature but it surely stopped when men began to use their labor in producing things which nature could not supply. Cases abound to show that it is not private property but *privilege* which is the cause of exploitation. The farmer, for example, is a property owner yet he is exploited mercilessly by the banker who has no productive instruments. Likewise all industry is compelled to pay a large part of its earnings to this privileged group for the use of an instrument of credit of which they are the principle securers. Marxism and other collectivistic schemes are permeated with superficial observations and reasoning. It is in the conditions of exchange of services and commodities that exploitation of man by man occurs. Unequal production and exchange privileges (patents and tariffs are good examples) ultimately and inevitably result in the accumulation of unsold goods and consequent idle capital.

7. In the exchange of products the question arises how much of one should exchange for a definite amount of the other. Thus arises the concept of value or exchange equivalency of one thing in terms of another. Under freedom, value, a psychological estimate, becomes, through competition, a balance between the aversion to overcome the task of production as against the desire to consume. That is to say that exchange values are predominantly determined by the amount of equally arduous labor embodied in products. But when



artificial hindrances are interposed between the producer and the opportunities to produce, the value of the product ceases to be determined by the natural hindrance to be overcome, but to this cost must be added the cost of overcoming the artificial hindrances, values then being determined more by the utility of products to the ones who ultimately purchase and consume them. It is these artificial and law-created hindrances that are the cause of what Karl Marx so glibly called “surplus value”, not the system of private property. Value cannot be determined by a blanket adoption of an “amount of labor” unit (a vague phrase) because there is no factor to resolve labor into its relatively useful and rightly distributed production. Collectivists’ superficial understanding of economics impels them to recourse to determine sales and productive proportions by a bureaucracy, thus destroying economic liberty and “anarchy in production.” Values are always changing due to the changing methods of manufacture and cultivation and the changing customs and desires of people. But the real “worth” of labor cannot be determined except by the free choice of supply and demand of a freely competitive system where a comparison can be made. Under free competition, man soon learns the usefulness of himself. The social usefulness of a man or group of men can only be determined by subjecting the products of his or their efforts to free exchange on a competitive market and thereby ascertaining the opinion of society, or at least that portion of society immediately concerned with his efforts. Determining value by law is reactionary, as Proudhon expressed it, “the dissolution of government in the economic organism”, that is to say the total elimination of politicians and government with the production and exchange of wealth.

Let us briefly consider some of the effects of economic liberty. Postulate EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY in having occupancy and use the only title to land and allowing free production and exchange.

Then:

ABUNDANCE is insured because of the natural spur each man has in getting returns proportionate to his productivity.

QUALITY is determined by the effective demands of buyers.

THE DEGREE OF SPECIALIZATION—While overspecialization tends to make man stupid and a robot, under-specialization results in a decrease of wealth produced. A balance is maintained by man's liberty, intelligence and opportunity to choose a job where he considers he gets the most wealth while working in a manner most congenial to him.

INTEREST on money is eliminated by abolishing the monopolistic privilege given to gold to serve as the only substance for the basis of issue of money and subjecting the insurance credit to free competition.

RENT (monopolistic) is abolished by making occupancy and use the only title to land.

ACCUMULATION OF WEALTH—Due to the abolition of special privileges (inevitable adjuncts to a governmental society), each individual having an equal opportunity to use his capacity for his own advantage, it is to be expected that accumulation of wealth will be approximately equally distributed among all producers. This approximate equality of wealth holdings which is at all times ready to compete in any enterprise promising to give exceptional returns will be a potent factor for keeping prices of all commodities down to production costs.

SIZE OF BUSINESS UNITS—The law of increasing and diminishing returns, under free competition, will cause the size of production units to gravi-

tate around the size where the most returns with the least effort and "red tape" will be realized, resulting in the greatest efficiency. Just as soon as any organization gets so large as to begin to show the evils of parliamentary government, the pressure of competition, which is lacking in governmental enterprises, and the lack of privileges which today give some competitors an unnatural advantage over others, will cause them to disintegrate or to adjust themselves to the size most capable of sound and efficient management. The lack of capitalistic accumulation is another factor tending to keep enterprises within non-cumbersome limits.

SELF-RELIANCE, CAPABILITY, AND STRENGTH—With an end of the weakening reliance on God or the State "doing something for us", each person will be dependent upon his own merits for his own well-being and happiness. Hence, a vastly superior race than the present may be expected. This does not imply the absence of religious freedom, however.

PROGRESS is maintained by the profit motive. In the interval between the adoption of more efficient methods of production by competitors, the innovator may reap a small temporary profit which is equivalent to a natural recompense for what extra expense the experiment or thought cost him. This "profit" is eminently just and is how society recompenses those who progressively contribute to its well-being.

EDUCATION—With the abolition of compulsory education, the increase of wealth per capita, and competition between schools—may be expected to show an invigorating and stimulating influence on education. No inefficient or incompetent school could withstand the pressure of competition in supplying the best education for the least cost. There will be no compulsory indoctrination or "training" by the state.

GOVERNMENT AND LAW—With government

gone as well as the robbery and tyranny which it maintains, increase of well-being of all will result in very little squabbling over mine and thine. Politicians, lawyers, soldiers, and policemen, instead of living off the people and keeping privileged classes in power, will support themselves by useful work.

TEMPO OF LIFE—Riches and security being within the reach of all, no one will continue the speed and madness that present life necessitates. Though it is possible to be rich without liberty, it is hardly possible that men would stay poor with freedom and opportunity. Individuality and variation would develop and enrich life.

CULTURE—True culture can exist neither in dire poverty nor with a superfluity of unearned wealth, but results from the joy of creative work. Eliminating exploitation possibilities can be expected to raise the cultural standards of a nation. Summary:

These suggestions are intended to show that improving the world by preaching and exhorting men to be good is utopian and futile; that changes in the economic system by which the maldistribution of wealth and the resulting poverty, crime, and social degradation are abolished, alone can give sure and lasting results. As the proposed changes imply the growth of egoistic intelligence and as intelligence and knowledge thrive best under conditions of affluence, liberty, and responsibility, the changes outlined above can come about only by an evolutionary process.

## **Competition and Government**

1. Competition is a natural method of social control and self-control. The State, then, government, resting as it does on arbitrary authority and power, i.e., on a denial or restriction of competition, is an anti-social institution, the most

potent enemy of progress. Had there never been an age of scarcity, the governmental idea probably would have never arisen in the human mind, nor the state originated. But as a direct consequence of the law of self-preservation, when there is insufficient for all, a scramble ensues. Robbery becomes a means of livelihood and murder clears the way for the unrestricted dominion of the murderers. And so it exists to the present time with the State as the instrument of robbery.

2. In a free society, competition (together with persuasion, ostracism, and non-cooperation) would be the principle methods of social control. (This would be genuine democracy, a generalization of the governing principle by decentralizing it). Competition is the voting into function by patronage, with the “referendum” and “recall” as immediate facilities. But a voter authorizes only himself.

This is the voluntary cooperation of those who agree; the essence of freedom and the means of progress. It eliminates bureaucracy, insures individuality in cooperation and is the only method of maintaining, unhampered, non-invasive individual initiative. Competition is impossible without private or personal possession.

3. With a governmental society, all is different. Excepting those on which it endows special privileges, the State is the only institution not existing on its merits. Every other institution, business, or association depends for its existence on the voluntary support it receives from its constituents. All other institutions or businesses depend on your opinion of its merits and on the voluntary payments you make to them for services rendered. All other enterprises, with the exception of those holding special privileges, are on a freely competitive basis.

Not so the State. It commands patronage, it dictates to you what you want, it determines the price you must pay, and generally in the name of democracy or "the voice of the people".

To be sure, there are limits to which it can go, which it sometimes reaches and oversteps. But, as a rule, it gets by quite well with its head-fixing facilities and in case of need intimidation and violence. The purpose of the State is to keep the ruling and exploiting classes in privilege and power. It is ever and always the expression of the wealthy, cunning and powerful. It cannot be otherwise, and all attempts to formulate the perfect State are utopian and futile.

4. Every man tries to put his will into effect. Give a man power over his fellows and he will immediately try to make them do as he wills or thinks best. Should they think and endeavor to act differently, the frustration of his will piques and may even infuriate him to use all the power in his command to coerce them. There arises a battle of wills in which he who possesses the necessary force has all the advantage. To carry out his wishes, instead of using persuasion and reason, he uses intimidation and violence. Is not all the history of governments a vindication of these simple truths? But let us suppose a benevolent individual, a man with intelligence and foresight, and a man with determination to be true to his ideas of right and justice and to not be swayed by the furor of individuals and mobs. Let us take our extravagantly supposed individual and endow him with arbitrary power. Then we might imagine the generation of a society of contented and docile inhabitants relieved of responsibility and care, with self-reliance and competency at a low ebb, and with flaccid uniformity the rule. What an emotionless, colorless, and

purposeless existence! Who would want it? The supposition is absurd, of course, because the very evolutionary process toward diversity and the will to expression would militate against it.

5. Authoritarians believe in promoting “progress” even if they have to use the club as a convincing argument on those who may not agree with their particular methods and aims. The value or stability of “progress” achieved in this way is questionable. Violence itself is invasive in nature; the coercion of competition, on the other hand—impulsion by example, non-cooperation, taboo, and ostracism—is libertarian and non-invasive. Authoritarians are content with nothing less than running the whole show; libertarians desire to let each pursue his/her own non-invasive course. In my interpretation, forms of Communism, Fascism, Democracy, etc., could exist under an anarchist regime provided they attracted *only those who wanted them*. (I would predict, however, that they could not hold adherents in competition with libertarian enterprises.) But this is not enough for the upholders of these systems. The whole hog or none is their motto. They wish to exercise *government*. But no institution is a government to those who voluntarily support it.

6. The attitude of trying to grant each man liberty compatible with equality of liberty is a *volte face* to that of trying to fit man to some preconceived system of society and requires a revolution in attitudes. Anarchists, knowing that violence can but retard the trend toward liberty, as revolutionaries dissuade its use and resort to education and example, through competition, as progressive forces. Thus, with competition between organizations, free choice to secede from one and join another, naturally that

type of organization which best satisfies its members will survive. As opposed to the State, the institution which attempts to maintain a condition of status (stationary) in opposition to the very evolutionary process itself, anarchy allows infinite variety and perpetual change. Free ability to experiment, change in accordance with nature and the advance of knowledge—this is order itself.

As nothing can resist change, the more powerful the State the more violent will be the change when it comes about—revolutionary instead of evolutionary. A disorderly, violent and bloody melee the outcome of which may find but little real change after all.

7. It is a delusion to think that a so-called “classless society” can be achieved through a State. All violent revolution can do is to replace one set of tyrants for another. Those who aspire to overthrow existing regimes by force play right into the hands of dictatorial groups for, in modern times, the probability of a dictatorship following a revolution far outweighs the probability of liberty. It is at least true that should there be enough people to make a successful libertarian revolution, there will then be enough to achieve a peaceful one. Circumstances alter cases, of course, but when men understand that their salvation lies in liberty, liberty they will have, but as long as “revolutionists” pin their faith in benevolent governments, governments they will have. Unfortunately, most individuals have a desire not for liberty, but for security and for the latter they will sell the former. Few men can comprehend the advantages of liberty; for most, the dear timid souls, the responsibility which liberty implies is too strong a remedy. People are despicably imbued with the get-something-for-nothing complex, either by swindling one’s fellows directly or through some



paternalistic governmental machine.

8. The Marxian philosophy is based on desperation, hate, and violence. Its exponents seem to attribute all the vices to the rich and all the virtues to the poor. They seem to be more interested in bringing down the affluent to the level of the impoverished rather than raise the impoverished to the level of the wealthy. They enjoy the prospect of seeing the rich do some dirty work. All this is the desire of the inferior man to bring the superior *down* to his level. I am here speaking of an attitude and am not intending to imply that the rich are actually “superior” to the poor. The Marxian’s faith in the “dictatorship of the proletariat”, which must of necessity be controlled by a small group, shows their lack of confidence in man, or even themselves. They prefer to believe in a comfortable doctrine rather than a true one. They need not be so timid. The moment the bluff upon which the State rests is “called”, is the moment its power vanishes. The State exists only because of the fiction in men’s minds. True, the existence of this fiction, reciprocally, rests on the existence of the State, but the extinction of the latter must be subsequent to the extinction of the former.

9. All government schemes are based on the attempt to *force* men to be good; all libertarian ones to *permit* men to be so. Hence the former assumes the natural depravity of man; the latter their innate goodness or perfectibility. Most of the beautiful psychological changes which are the aims of communists depend upon an abundance of equitably distributed wealth. Unrestricted individual liberty will assuredly supply this condition; therefore there is nothing sound in communism that is not equally true for individualism. The main difference being that individualism can prove the means for supply-

ing this condition from known facts while communism rests mainly on hypotheses and assumptions. Communism is based on the presumptuous proposition that I am my brother's keeper and am responsible for his well-being. Hence it gives a pretext for all meddlers to force their ignorant wills on others. The libertarian viewpoint, on the other hand, is that worse than to refuse help where it is wanted is to give help where it is not wanted. There is a fundamental difference between the two.

In a world where no two things are alike, where a process of differentiation is continually at work, where, in the nature of things, no two persons think alike and difference of opinion is inevitable, the collectivist solution to social order does violence to elementary sense. Instead of the compulsory combination and cooperation of these different elements in society, the result of which is inevitable discord, the move should be in the opposite direction—to allow the greatest amount of independence practicable. Wherein people agree, they voluntarily combine to do what each one thinks is to his benefit. There is no authority needed for this. But, so long as there exists (and there always will exist) individuality in men, so long as they differ in tastes, likes and dislikes, in what is good and what is not good, the only way to obviate friction is to allow the greatest amount of freedom. Any compulsory combination of people invites discord and strife for individuality cannot be stifled.

## Section 2

# Evolving Experiments with Anarchist Economics

*World events do not occur by accident. They are made to happen, whether it is to do with national issues or economic cycles, which are staged and managed by those who hold the purse string.*

Dennis Healey, former British  
Secretary of Defence and  
Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Anarchism is generally considered a “fringe” body of ideas, but seldom is the anarchist condemnation of government associated with *conspiracy theory*. But in truth the American individualist anarchists were forerunners of modern conspiracy theory and the pages of Tucker’s lively journal *Liberty* overflowed with animated discussions analyzing land ownership, money issuance, inflation (and other economic cycles), taxation, rent, interest, centralized banking and war as various conspiracies of *privilege*. Behind every political party and system stand a group of shadowy oligarchs who have been made rich through this conspiracy of privilege and who secretly control the machinery of the State, directing it through stealthy undercurrents and seeing to it that no legislation is enacted hostile to their interests and privilege. Acutely sensitive to the dangers

of the not-so- invisible partnership between high finance and the various prostitute levels of government (whereby certain business empires have utilized the State in a conspiracy against competition in order to concentrate and control wealth), the American individualists associated with Benjamin Tucker saw that capitalism never has (and never will) function without the State. “Free-Market” capitalism was a swindle guided by the unseen hand of an oligarchic minority who realized that the surest route to the acquisition of massive wealth was to use the police power of the State as a means of maintaining a private and coercive legal monopoly over the economy (and by so doing impose their aims on the entire social body).

The American individualists were also some of the first radicals to discuss communism and state socialism, stripped of all pretenses, as constituting a conspiracy *against* the proletariat. Communism wasn’t merely a historical phenomenon of the underprivileged, the disenfranchised, and the property-less rising up as crusaders in justified wrath against their masters; it was also a vehicle for the seizure of State power carried out through the subterfuge of revolutionary rhetoric promising retribution and vengeance by both a cold-blooded Party core (to whom Marxism is just a tool to realize their secret desires to rule) and also by *right-wing* socialists (who were considered by far the most dangerous and influential, as they weren’t known publically as socialists, called themselves *capitalists, individualists, private enterprisers*, etc., and professed full faith in the “free market”). The right-wing socialists of Tucker’s day included many of the leading industrialists, mercantilists, bankers and statesmen, and to Tucker

and his circle it seemed demonstrable that the roots of state socialism in the United States lay not in anything so exotic as Marxist ideology, but in the efforts of American businessmen to escape the rigors of real competition through conspiratorial alliances with the State (which eliminated laissez-faire and secured state protection for certain financial dynasties and power cartels). The individualist anarchists also foresaw the grim underpinning of the social order that the communists envisaged and the inevitable rise of a new class that would take charge of the collectivity and herd millions into slave labor camps (one of the greatest blunders in sociological understanding emerged from the attempt to associate anarchist philosophy with communism, which ideologically is its direct antithesis). Far from *empowering* the proletariat, Marxism instead becomes a system of faith and worship, an antidote for frustration, and a flimsy framework to give life content; it allows the powerless to indulge in a delusion of special selection and messianic service to humanity and to find in the epic fictions of communism a quasi-religious replacement for internal emptiness—while political bosses exploit the insecurity, anxiety and accumulating tensions of the proletariat by fashioning ever-more monolithic systems of state captivity. The individualists weren't excessively paranoid about any of this, and simply took it as a matter of course that most humans pursue predominantly selfish interests and that all theories of social organization that weren't *voluntary* would attract the most aggressive authoritarians interested in manipulating them for their own purposes.

Of all the various and nefarious organized power cartels, the individualists placed the greatest im-

portance on the banking clique or “money power”, whom they considered the supreme masters of all industry and commerce. Laurance Labadie was weaned on this conspiratorial moonshine and as his own ideas matured he made several inflammatory contributions to this continuous flow of thought. With typical disregard for popular tastes or fashion, Labadie conceived the basic outline of his conspiratorial concept of money in the 1930’s, with its implication that the single reform that could bring most leverage into the service of individualism and freedom would be the separation of money and state! A bold assertion indeed and a pretty laughable one at first glance, but in the two pieces gathered in this next section Labadie manages to articulately lay siege to thoughtless, absolutist positions on the issue.

For whatever reason, the activities of the economy exerted a huge fascination on the American individualist anarchists (probably due to the fascination of the infinitely augmentable, that is, of *eternal progress*) and became a type of transcendental projection to them—a god-like ideal capable of social miracles. Consequently, even Labadie’s economic theories read like theology at times, full of a priori assumptions that are expected to be taken on faith. Ironically, the staunch egoist and anti-moralist Labadie unwittingly falls into the use of moral language and categories precisely when he starts to talk about economics (This is inevitable when individuals can’t see the economy as a realm of abstraction and relate to it as something with a factual, tangible existence). By mixing up and adulterating his reasoned critiques of capitalism with conjectural spooks, Labadie’s own semi-interesting fervor for economics is undermined (though, characteristically, Labadie spikes even his most metaphysical, preacher-style economic speculations with unsuspected twists and merciless black

humor). Sure, a people enjoying free exchange are a more liberated people, and have rarely ever existed, due largely to the interference of the State, but are the supposed “laws” of economics really that easy to determine....and do they *really exist at all*? Obviously, a condition of generalized Anarchy wouldn’t *preclude* markets, but Labadie seems to dramatically overstate the role they might play. Still, given that no one else was working this turf in the 1940’s and fifties, Labadie can’t really be accused of lack of originality (stubbornness and repetition, maybe) and his impertinent, contrarian methodology is sure to cause a disturbance in the minds of those who rely on inherited guidelines and dogma.

Labadie also makes some challenging points about competition as an essential force for keeping relationships between individuals lively, stimulating to thought and imagination, dynamic and exciting. But what Labadie doesn’t consider is that Economy, which requires some amount of *standardization* of these relationships, might best be understood as a **taming** and reigning in of competition. Another aspect of Labadie’s infatuation with economic categories worth critiquing is his continued attachment to the idea of *private* property; Most likely, Labadie was referring to *personal* property, but in discussions of that nature he can’t break with the language of the State—that which distinguishes the *public* from the *private*. Since the “public” is used for that which the State represents (or is said to represent) it’s an abstraction, as is its opposite, the “private”. Etymologically, “private” comes from a Latin word which translates as “to deprive”; *private property*, therefore, refers to property that the State has permitted an individual to take away from “the public” (or the “commonweal”)—i.e., property the public is deprived of. But if you recognize “the public” as a fiction with no existence (as Labadie so clearly did in

numerous pieces) then it obviously can't be deprived of anything and *private* property becomes meaningless.

Labadie's treatment of the money question certainly unmasks the absurdities of communist views on exchange, but completely overlooks the predominant role of money over the centuries, namely, as an instrument and symbol of *conquest*. Ancient Greece provides numerous examples of money's function as an imperial tool announcing the military conquest of a culture (the reign of Alexander the Great brought about an unprecedented degree of monetary uniformity over much of the known world, with the old images of gods on coins being replaced with his own—one of the first examples of the use of coins as imperial propaganda). The Roman emperors made even more extensive use of coins for propaganda, one historian going so far as to claim that "the primary function of the coins is to record the messages which the emperor and his advisers desired to commend to the subjects of the empire". Numismatic historian Glyn Davies points out that "coins were by far the best propaganda weapon available for advertising Greek, Roman or any other civilization in the days before mechanical printing was invented." Going back even further, Labadie seems completely oblivious to the religious, *sacred* character of money and to its origins in the temples of ancient Mesopotamia, where clay tokens were first introduced by the temple priest-kingdom as certificates of fulfilled contributions to the temple-state (incidentally, the first State in history).

Labadie's dogged preservation of the down-to-earth economic analysis of Benjamin Tucker and his allies (which is refreshingly free of bloated terminology like *valorization*, *marginal utility*, *dialectical materialism*, or *opacity*) was one of his greatest assets, but in today's world it's also one of his greatest defi-



ciencies, as the nascent capitalism that the first generation individualist anarchists were critically appraising has now grown so ubiquitous and so terrible in its might that the mind is staggered before it—and it seems impossible to conceive of a way to constrain the rapacious frenzy of the global economy (it can be argued that capitalism and the State had too great a head start on the centralization of economic and political life for the ideas of the anarchist-mutualists to catch up). Labadie's theories haven't been entirely forgotten, however, and *The Illuminatus Trilogy* by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson makes repeated references to Labadie's economics, and Labadie himself is mentioned several times in the appendices to Part 3: Leviathan.

## **Basic Essentials of the Money Problem (1948)**

Schopenhauer once said that the person who did not cherish solitude did not love liberty. This is a profound observation. For it is only when one is alone that one is truly free. He can then do what he wishes without disturbing others, or being annoyed by them. The solution of the social problem would be complete if it were possible for each person to be completely independent of all others.

Unfortunately this is impossible. For it would require that each individual have the ability to furnish all his own needs. He would need to have the time, energy, know-how, and opportunity, and

be completely versatile, which of course are beyond the capabilities of anyone. And besides, there are some things that require combined effort, and division of labor, in order to be accomplished at all, and of course it requires the cooperative effort of two individuals, male and female, in order for human life itself to germinate. Hence, cooperation, to some degree, is an absolute necessity for the continuity of the human race.

We should not overlook the fact, however, that cooperation is intrinsically inimical to liberty. Because as more persons are involved in an enterprise, the less liberty does each have. For each must consider the wishes and desires of others. And since, as a direct consequence of individuality, the more individuals involved or required there will necessarily be a correspondingly proportional diminishment of individual liberty for each. Until we get to very large enterprises wherein each individual must submerge and suppress his individuality in order to serve the purpose of the enterprise, and to insure that each one's activity be coordinated with the activities of all the others. And this requires conforming to a pre-agreed-upon plan, or upon some *modus operandi* to be used as an authority for making decisions and compelling each of the associated to conform with the decisions made. In short, practically all cooperative endeavors require the use of the principle of authority in order to be coordinated effectively. Otherwise the very purpose of the cooperative effort is nullified.

Elsewhere we have shown that individual initiative and individual responsibility require the operation of the law of consequences, whereby each individual may do whatever he wishes, but at his own cost. The rock bottom requisite for such a condition is the possibility for each individual to revert to whatever state of independence he may

desire. The basic essential of liberty is the right and opportunity to disassociate. And this right is completely nullified in all communistic schemes wherein the individual is inextricably bound to a group and denied the liberty of independent action. And it should be obvious that to speak of liberty without at the same time implying the existence of individual and private property (within the limited application of the principle of exclusion necessary only to protect and insure individual liberty) is to speak utter nonsense. For so-called “communist anarchists” or any other brand of collectivists to speak of complete denial of private property and liberty at the same time exposes with what idiocy the human mind can indulge in absurdities.

Now then, since, as we may see, some degree of cooperation is absolutely necessary between humans, and albeit cooperation is essentially inimical to liberty, we are faced with a contradiction, which however may be reconciled. For while in combined cooperation the principle of authority is an essential for the functioning of the associated enterprise, this is not so in the exchange relationships between individuals and between enterprises. This is so because exchange is a voluntary act, with the opportunity for either party to demur should he not agree with the terms of a specific trade.

We hope we do not need to elaborate here upon the inconveniences and impossibilities of simple barter for any other than the simplest trades between persons who happen to have what each other wants. Nor need we comment upon the sentimental slobberings of those who deem that the solution of the social problem depends upon the universalization of love and affection. If you had a slip of paper or other valid token of claim, and took it to a mart, and exchanged this token or IOU for certain goods, you need not know who made

the goods, nor whether he lived in Timbuktu, nor whether personally he might be a character who would be thoroughly repugnant to you and with whom you might not want to have any personal dealings: the fact that he had produced something which you wanted, at a price and quality satisfactory to you and that others throughout the world were also producing things wanted by some people, is all that is necessary to have a cooperative world, and one in which the persons involved are mutually benefiting each other.

The question which now arises, and which may be asked by persons not intensely familiar with the basic questions of production and exchange, may be: Why, since something quite similar to what has just been proposed is now operative in the known world, is there such a disparity between rich and poor; and why the internecine industrial, commercial, and jurisdictional (between governments) scrambles and wars which have existed throughout the course of history?

I have suggested that money is one of the greatest cooperative devices ever invented by man. It is one of the trinity—self-interest, the authority of management, and money and credit. With money, the direct personal supervision and authoritative implementation of enforcing decisions may be avoided in favor of individual choice. For by the means of money, each may cooperate with innumerable persons in innumerable places, neither of which may be known by any individual cooperator. We neither know nor care who these persons may be: what we individually are interested in is that someone, somewhere, is producing something which we may want, and that our evidences of claim or money is sufficient warrant or proof that we have produced something of value for someone, and that this claim is transferable for the things offered for

trade, which we may want. It is in this manner that the fundamental social problem may be solved—the problem which is: Who is to do what, when, where, why, and how, and what is each to receive for what he has accomplished? For when we buy a thing on the market, we are virtually choosing the person who made the thing, into the function and enterprise he has chosen. The complete operation is voluntary, with the option of refusal possessed by each party involved.

Communists wish to insure each having his needs satisfied, but they attempt to accomplish this by first denying liberty and independence. Some (anarchist) communists foolishly and idiotically proclaim that this is liberty. With obvious predatory propensities, they expect to coerce the “able” to take care of the “needy” by denying them any other alternative, and thereby utterly uprooting free choice. By thus exposing their believing themselves to have more needs than abilities, they inadvertently proclaim the incompetence of the majority of mankind. Communism, as Proudhon put it, is “the philosophy of misery.” Communists need not have such fear of liberty.

And yet, the issue and control of money has been one of the greatest exploitative devices ever used by man, often endowing the monopolists of their functioning with even greater power than the coercive organizations of power, or governments, which uphold their privileges. For it is by virtue of their monopoly that banking systems have been able to charge exorbitant prices for their services, under the term “interest” for the mere act of endorsing the credit of their clients. And derived from this extortionate operation is the apparent ability of actual capital to likewise obtain a similar superfluous over-price, which is termed “profit.”

It is from the fact of the original monopoliza-

tion of the principle factors in the production and exchange of wealth, namely land and money, that the myriads of evils are affected, which are subsequently attempted to be cured at the periphery. One of the main evils which concern men at the moment is the suppressions and repressions now noticed by psychologists. They are unable, because their specialization excludes the consideration of many factors influencing the behavior of man, to realize that the neuroses and psychoses they are concerned with are effects of the hindrances placed in the way of man's natural creative expressions, particularly as they refer to the obtaining of his livelihood. For the main evil stemming from the human exploitation effected by land and money monopolies is not exploitation *per se*, but the artificial manufacture of scarcity and of all the mad scrambles which it entails. For the money or claim so extorted subtracts from the legitimate opportunities and claims which are essential to the free functioning of the production and exchange of wealth. Moreover, the artificial scarcity so induced leads to numerous forms of contention and strife, not the least of which is war itself.

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If the various aspirants to ameliorate the woes of man could or would stop for a moment from trying to treat effects, and carefully trace the nature of these effects to their basic causes, they might save themselves considerable abortive effort. For it is utterly futile to try to remove effects while the fundamental causes of these effects are still operative. I am referring to those persons and professions whose economic interest or pay stems directly from the very woes and follies which man now commits and suffers from. Professional moralists and religionists, politicians, physicians, psychologists, pacifists, and so-called

social workers of every description unfortunately find it expedient to merely treat effects, as a method of obtaining their livelihood, rather than indulge in the drastic attempt to eradicate the evils that form the *raison d'être* for their activities. And we find ignorant and stupid men such as Freud and Reich, such as the ingenious inventors of perfect social and political systems, such as the aspirers of the meaningful and simple life, and numerous others, all of whom are basically concerned with the alienation of man from his habitat and from nature—toward a condition of complete disintegration—leading indeed to his utter self-extinction. At this stage of the historical development of man, there has come into existence, as a sort of diabolical process or chain of events, of which ancient man was the unwitting instigator and modern man, as a creature of habit, the unwitting victim—a sort of fatalistic tendency the extrication from which would seem to require some sort of miracle or innovation of which there is no known precedent in history. And the best that man has seemed able to do, in the face of increasingly anomalous misery coincident with the potentialities of a more or less Eden-like existence, is to invoke exhortations of good will and love, as if these were prerequisites to a harmonious world, rather than outgrowths and effects of liberty itself. One would be led to believe that good will and love were matters of legislation or constitutions to be coercively impressed upon the victims of an insane world.

This at least seems to be the conclusion of various varieties of collectivists who, thinking in terms of groups or herds, believe that by the grasping of power, by coercive management, and by indoctrination into their supposedly lovely morals, they may subsequently let loose and “wither away,” after which man shall live happily ever after—the whole scheme a sort of mundane application of

theological doctrines based upon nothing more than wishful fantasies congealed into superstitions. In other words, out of the suppression of liberty, liberty itself should miraculously arise like a phoenix from the ashes. Liberty indeed is conceived as a system of social relationships rather than the prerogative of potentially independent individuals. Such is the ratiocination of the herd mind.

## **The Relationship of Money to the Social Problem**

### ***Essence of the Problem***

What is the social problem? What, in essence, is the significance of monarchy, limited monarchy, constitutional government, parliamentarianism, division of powers councils, powwows, dumas, senates, proportional representation, different forms of balloting, etc., etc.? What is the basic problem confronting communism, democracy, socialism, anarchism, and all other forms of cooperative society conceived and imaginable? We hear of the social problem, the political problem, the economic problem, etc. My argument is that they all involve, indeed really constitute, a single problem. And that problem is the *question of making decisions*. Amid the welter of propaganda from all sides, and in all times, this simple fact seems to be overlooked.

### ***Necessity of Cooperation***

Men have cooperated for hundreds of thousands of years, no doubt. They have done so in order to capitalize on degrees of ability, experience, initiative,



etc., of various individuals, for purposes of mutual aid. Even the division into sexes is a kind of division of labor. It is well known that the human animal is one of the most helpless when born. Anyhow, it may be said that without mutual aid, practiced in some manner, the human race couldn't even survive.

### ***The inescapable problem***

Now when any number of persons join to do anything, the first question that arises is *what* they are going to do, *why*, *when*, *where*, and *how*, and what each is going to put into the enterprise, and what each is going to get out of it. Of course, the further down they get into particulars and specifications, the more and various are the decisions they are called upon to make. They cannot elude the conundrum: the *problem of making decisions*. Who is or how are you going to *decide* what, when, where, how, etc.?

### ***Coordination required***

What is required, obviously, is a *modus operandi* for coming to decisions. And when the decisions are made, they are then supposed to represent the group's decision, to which all of the associated are expected to conform. Why? Because cooperation, to be effective, and not handicap or frustrate the very purpose of its inauguration and being, requires the *coordination* of the activities of the associated, according to a *consistent* plan.

### ***The simplest recourse***

Of course, the easiest and simplest way to solve this problem is to put some competent fellow at the head, and make him boss or king, on the supposition that a single individual is not likely to be inconsistent with himself,—that he can formulate and direct a plan, whatever it may be, that will not be in conflict with itself.

### ***Unavoidable evils***

Experience has shown, however, that such delegation of power, or say-so, as the initiator or final arbiter of decisions, has always been accompanied by abuse, exploitation, tyranny, and the numerous forms of corruption common to all governments. Hence the attempts to curb absolute power by various expedients. None of these expedients, however, have denied the feasibility of *having* an absolute power, such as an institution like the State, armed with violence to enforce its decisions. This is so, even when decisions are attempted to be made, as is said, “democratically”.

Although it has no necessary bearing on the contention here developed, I might parenthetically observe that the origin and purpose of government is much different, in fact quite contrary, than what is commonly supposed.

### ***Some essential factors of the problem***

In attacking the problem before us, of making decisions socially, it is feasible to mention a few of the factors or principles, which must be taken into consideration in planning the activities of humans.

The first, certainly, is *individuality*—differences of opinion, tastes, needs, desires, etc.—which individuality, in itself, constitutes the *raison d’être* for a social problem. For whenever there is agreement, no social (in contradistinction to technological) problem arises. It is only when there are *differences* about ways and means that a problem exists.

Our next ingredient is *egoism*, the patent fact that each individual is paramountly concerned with his own well-being, that self-interest and self-preservation is the primary concern of practically every living organism, and that each organism follows the path of least resistance toward the goal,

according to its lights. (This appears to make Love as a basis for human relations a bit fatuous.)

Again, that *expediency* is the operational law of human action, subservient only to the will to live. A person will live according to an accepted principle of conduct, if he can; he will subvert it if he must. At any rate he will do the best he knows how under the circumstances, according to his estimate of *consequences*.

It is not only these, but other factors it will be unnecessary to mention here, which are really what gives rise to the social problem itself. They prove persistent stumbling blocks to the solution of that problem.

### ***Some common misconceptions***

Here I would like to emphasize a few factors that are commonly ignored or too lightly regarded, in considering the nature of the social problem and its solution.

One is that there is no such thing as *group mind*—there is only a conglomeration of divergent minds. The tendency of thinking of people in terms of a group, of using such terms as “society” or “nation,” etc., *as if they were actual entities* (really the herd impulse personified), is probably one of the crudest errors of sociological thought. It has been the invariable basis of nearly all utopian schemes even before the time of Plato. The organic concept of society probably has its roots in paternalism, and inevitably leads to the conviction of the necessity for the State.

Another is the rather startling fact that *disassociation is the key to harmony*. No form of communism will ever be able to subvert this fact. As Josiah Warren, the discoverer of this principle, phrased it, social order demands “the abandonment of combination as the *basis of society*.” He found that indiscriminately combining persons of divergent

desires and opinions, thereby bringing these differences into close juxtaposition, only invites dissatisfaction, discord, and conflict. Like Proudhon after him, he saw no solution of the social problem in association, and claimed it should only be resorted to within clearly defined limits and when individual effort was insufficient. Associations, if and when they exist, should be voluntarily formed, with the right of secession always optional. (The State, by the way, is the only institution in society which prohibits non-adherence to it.)

A third point, already hinted at, and the last I shall mention pertains to the natural law of *consequences*. Any society which ignores circumvents, or in any way contravenes the assurance that each individual will experience the *natural consequences* of his actions is bound to get into trouble. That is the basic fallacy of political systems of all kinds,—one or some men making decisions involving others, usually with neither their knowledge nor consent. The demoralizing and disintegrating effect of this policy should be evident on slight reflection. Here, too, incidentally, is a consideration of which all brands of communism seem oblivious.

### ***Two forms of social control***

At this stage the reader is probably thinking, “I thought this was to be about money”. And so it is, in due course. But before we got into that, we needed to get a clear and definite idea of what the social problem consists of. Basically, it is the *problem of making decisions*.

Looking at the picture, we have a world full of potentially independent individuals, who find independence and cooperation feasible, nay even necessary, for their mutual well-being.

This kind of cooperation, known for thousands of years, was *direct* cooperation, *requiring direct*

*supervision*. That is until exchange between *independent* producers, and the *indirect and impersonal control under which competition is the directing influence*, came along.

Lambert Schuyler, in his brochure *Think Fast America*, has shown, conclusively in my opinion, that civilization and culture flourished with *trade*—whereby division of labor was stimulated until the immediate needs of man could be supplied to the extent that he was enabled to have sufficient *leisure* to devote to more cultural pursuits. The spread of knowledge really began when men traveled for commercial purposes, and carted around, with their goods, ideas and experiences they had acquired in different places.

### ***The social role of money***

And so we have arrived—at money. It is needless to go into the inconveniences of barter. It is enough to recognize that it was a *generally* acceptable and accepted *intermediary* for exchange of goods. Nor need we rehash how credit money evolved from and gradually supplanted commodity money. All that is necessary is to realize is that here is a piece of paper, representing work done, or the claim on the work of others, that it is presumably evidence that its issuer owns or possesses wealth by which it may be redeemed, and that its holder has produced something of value to get it and is entitled to something else of equivalent value from someone.

And here I want to stress an important point. The *origin* of such a note can legitimately be only a *producer*. And I don't mean by producer some fellows with only a printing press and paper. No man or institution has any business issuing claims on wealth unless he or it produces wealth. Work that around awhile and see what you make of it. (How the control and issue of money was usurped

by monarchs, private monopolies protected by governments, and governments themselves, is another story. It would involve the history of legal robbery, revolutions and wars ever since, and is of course outside the scope of this paper.)

Now we come to the point of the discourse. What can you, the individual, do with this money? You can take it to the market, to the world of things representing the results of the efforts of others, and buy there what is offered. When you do that, what are you doing? You are making a choice, a *decision*, for *yourself alone*, not for others. You are *not* going to the polls to elect someone to push *me* around, or vice versa. You are virtually *electing* someone, the person or persons who made that thing, but only, so far as you are concerned, into the function or work which *they* have chosen. Of course, if they get no “votes” they will have to “run” for a different “office”. Their tenure of office is contingent upon their furnishing the goods, in a satisfactory manner, and is cut off immediately when they fail to come across, or when others prove that they are more fitting to do the work.

Now the *resultant* of all these *individual choices* is a *cooperative society*, without any direct supervision, without bureaucracy, dictators, kings, presidents, commissars, senators, etc., and all that vast and officious horde of political leeches which society has endured since time immemorial. We have here a *modus operandi* by which individual liberty is preserved in social affairs, and, I think, one key to the understanding of Proudhon’s famous pronouncement: “Liberty, the mother, not the daughter, of order.”

This almost automatic condition of affairs *was made possible by the invention of money*. I believe that the discovery of this method of exchanges was the greatest cooperative and liberative element in history.

It seems to me incredible how the significance of this discovery and its bearing on the social problem has been so prevalently overlooked, even by money reformers themselves. They consider it merely as part of the "economic" problem, as they say.

But this method of *implementing a promise*, in such a way as to allow it to circulate, is really the oil which lubricates the process of making decisions under Liberty..

It may appear hopeless to attempt to convince people of these times that the money function must be taken out of the hands of a monopoly. Whether that monopoly be private or State is immaterial. There is altogether too much dependence on the State institution to act as big papa to settle our difficulties and solve our problems. That the State machine should be the effective cause of those difficulties seldom enters the heads of the populace. Indeed, take the concept of the State from the minds of nearly every reformer and revolutionist who aspires to save the world, and his thinking is checkmated immediately. Money reformers especially are addicted to this source of solace. Such is the degree and extent to which the great political superstition of the ages has infiltrated into human consciousness, that most people do not realize that the only way to decide who is to do what, when, where, why, and how in the world is to allow complete freedom of activity and let competition be the deciding factor. Indeed, when a government controls the money mechanism, people with any sense will soon discover that the government has got you, not you the government. I forbear from mentioning the word anarchy lest this room be speedily depopulated. We are all so deeply involved with this apparent pap dispensing apparatus called the State that most of us are horrified at the suggestion that we might be able to survive without

it. It seldom occurs to us where it gets its horn of plenty.

Neither is there time to discourse on money monopoly being the cause of human exploitation, of limiting the volume of industrial activity, of business depressions, of bankruptcy, boondoggling,—yes, and WAR. The monopoly of money control is and has been the world's most gigantic racket. No government in the world today could even begin a war unless it had printing presses with which to print money, or bonds.

I have been trying to show the significance and importance of the money problem. Its relation to the question of power and concentration of say-so should be evident. Lovers of liberty especially should realize that they cannot get to first base against all the trends of the times, unless and until the money function can be pried loose from the various monopolistic controls which now obtain, and put into the hands of producers where it rightfully belongs.

*December 1948*



# Section 3

## The Misanthropic Years

Chord

*Hope is the normal form of delirium.*

—E. M. Cioran

Labadie was always a hard-boiled observer of human affairs, but in the late-1950s his long-brewed cynicism fully erupted and he started churning out some of the cleverest and most incisive satiric thrusts at the folly of humanity ever produced by an anarchist. With very few active anarchists left in the United States during this period of time, Labadie began forming a critical affinity with the decentralist movement, founded by the agrarian theorist and experimenter in self-sufficient living Ralph Borsodi. Borsodi established a “School of Living” in Rockland County, New York during the winter of 1934 that focused on physical and economic independence from the dominant culture and he encouraged others to follow his example during the Great Depression. His 1929 book *This Ugly Civilization* is said to have inspired hundreds of thousands of people to leave the cities and embrace homesteading as a way of redressing the economic and psychological insecurities of the industrialized age. Labadie had significant disagreements with Borsodi, but he appreciated the basic decentralist impulse and was very taken with Borsodi’s book, which I’ll quote from here:

*THIS is an ugly civilization.*

*It is a civilization of noise, smoke, smells, and crowds--of people content to live amidst the throbbing of its machines; the smoke and smells of its factories; the crowds and the discomforts of the cities of which it proudly boasts.*

*The places in which the people work are noisy. The factories are filled with the recurring, though not the rhythmic, noises of machines and the crash and clatter incidental to their operation. The offices, too, are noisy with the rat-tat-tat of typewriters, the ringing of telephones, the grinding of adding machines. The streets on which the people move about, and around which they work and play, resound with the unending clatter of traffic--the roar of motors, the squeaks of brakes, the shrieks of sirens, and the banging of street cars. And even the homes in which they are supposed to rest are noisy because they are not only packed close together but built tier on tier so that the pianos, phonographs, and radios in them blare incongruously above, below, and on all sides of them.*

*The people of this factory-dominated civilization accept its noisiness. For noise is the audible evidence of their prowess; the inescapable accompaniment of their civilization's progress. The greater the noise, the greater the civilization. Above all, this civilization is ugly because of the subtle hypocrisy with which it persuades the people to engage in the factory production of creature comforts while imposing conditions which destroy their capacity for enjoying them. With one hand it gives comforts--with the other hand it takes comfort itself away.*

*The servitude to the factory which it enforces uniformly upon all men harnesses skilled workers and creative individuals in a repetitive treadmill which makes each muscle in their bodies, every drop of blood in their veins, the very fibres of their being, cry out in voiceless*

*agony that they are being made to murder time--the irreplaceable stuff of which life itself is composed. For America is a respecter of things only, and time--why time is only something to be killed, or butchered into things which can be bought and sold.*

Labadie's exposure to these anti-industrial/anti-mechanistic perspectives had a profound impact on how he began to discuss social engineering, individual autonomy and the debacle of humanity in general. Labadie was in high gear as a writer during the 1960's, but so was his growing pessimism regarding the successful implementation of anarchist ideas. Labadie never lost faith in anarchism, but in humanity's ability, given historical developments, to put anarchism into practice and wrote extensively, sometimes brilliantly, on the unhappy ending he saw the human race traveling toward. In many ways, there's a conceptual trajectory between Labadie's earlier writings and his frightening dying-earth forecasts of the late 1960's; something feels *dangerous* about the depressive, lunatic-fringe epistles from that period—yet they're merely an intensification of Labadie's younger preoccupations, only this time utterly devoid of any hope in human intellectual evolution. Humanity was a lost wager to Labadie and if he still clung to any notion of "progress" in his final two decades of life it was one of *progressive ruin*. Seeing no deliverance or salvation from humanity's vain, aimless drifting towards a mass grave, Labadie responded with a steady, unflinching stream of essays reflecting upon the grim comedy of politics, religion and existence itself. Beaten half to death by the futility of his chosen path, the grizzled, battle-scarred Labadie entered into seclusion and a renunciation of society in upstate New York during the early 1960s in order to study and write—turning away from the modern rat race to

become a disappointed spectator of anarchism's disintegration and inertia. His niece Carlotta Anderson describes this doom-mongering cycle in Labadie's life in bittersweet terms in her book:

"Despite grossly deficient housekeeping skills, Laurance maintained precise files of his prodigious correspondence with still-living members of his father's circle, with latter-day libertarians, and with those involved in the Borsodi-Loomis back-to-the-land movement, which advocated Henry George's single tax on land. He thrived on controversy and his verbal tangles with correspondents could be insulting. "He would eat you alive at the faintest sign of wavering of intelligence," his friend James Martin remembered. Many folders full of "Unsent Letters to Mildred Loomis" (Borsodi's chief lieutenant), plus copies of the ones Laurance actually sent, testify to his profound exasperation with what he considered her (and Borsodi's) muddle-headed thinking. Like his father, he exhibited particular scorn for the academic community.

Increasingly reclusive as time went on, Laurance would engage in interminable monologues with his few visitors, switching abruptly from subject to subject in a sort of stream of consciousness style. Sharp-tongued and irascible to some, slyly sarcastic, he was also often generous and kindly. He took special delight in children, with whom he felt a kinship; the children of former black neighbors in Detroit spent what must have been a couple of gloriously unstructured summers with him in the 1960s in Suffern. To a few intimates, he revealed a delightfully acerbic wit, often telling jokes on himself. He claimed, for example, that he followed a well-balanced diet, eating carrots one year, spinach the next, and so on, a problem only arising if he did not live long enough to incorporate all the food groups. To those few friends, he possessed an endearing vulnerability.

Laurance never married. He thought it a humorous irony that when--in his fifties--he finally asked a woman at the School of Living to marry him (even though he considered her unattractive because of "bad skin") and she turned him down. He told a friend that he had tried sex a couple of times and thought it highly overrated. Depicting himself as "physically out of gear," Laurance felt the emotional side of his nature was undeveloped. "Probably through fear, I kept it suppressed and never let my heart out to anyone," he wrote.

Bedeviled by feelings of his own worthlessness, Laurance considered most of mankind pretty worthless as well. He concluded, toward the end of his life, that he had had no influence whatever. He attributed the destruction of his health and spirit mainly to "the frustration coming from lack of communication." His outlook became so cataclysmic that "it made even most editors of radical journals run and flinch," according to James Martin. In his last published work, *What Is Man's Destiny?* (1970), Laurance foresaw the impending doom of humanity and stated that "it is completely preposterous to expect that the general battle for power between governments (whose mere existence as mutual threats mutually support each other) could possibly eventuate in anything other than the mutual extermination of the human race." He concluded in his last years that the practical realization of anarchism was "a pipe dream."

Despite this misanthropic standpoint, Laurance enjoyed a high status among the renegade minds associated with Ralph Borsodi's School of Living (such as the young Robert Anton Wilson and Herbert C. Roseman, founder of Revisionist Press) who enjoyed the provocation and stimulus of his brooding fatalism and stayed amazingly committed to his echoless "scribblings" (as he called them),

dashing off five to nine vitriolic pages a day. His was not a *complacent* despair and in his twilight years Labadie acquired a kind of bitter dignity where self-exile was equated not only with independent thinking but with resistance. By the 1960's, Labadie was contemplating a corrupted dream of anarchism from the outside, looking on as his world transformed unrecognizably and seeing no hope that herd-minded humans would ever escape their stupidity and delusions. There's a palpable feel of decay to Labadie's relentless late-period negativity, which connects his own anarchist woes with the fate of the world. Writing against the times, though also very much from within them, a nearly complete misanthropy flows through these distressed essays like black water, as Labadie examines without weakness or pity the underside of the human phenomenon in order to broadcast its horror—his writings gathering more and more momentum with each new, rabid bark. Labadie took his dark observations to extremes in pieces like *What Is Man's Destiny?* (a grim ride of paranoia and persecution, which wound up on the cutting-room-floor due to length) and *The World As We Know It* (an equally unforgettable essay scrutinizing the New World Order and the brainwashing/hypnosis of the masses), both of which show Labadie screaming at the top of his lungs about the blocked horizon the 21<sup>st</sup> century confronted him with. Labadie really starts to show his claws (and occasionally, over-indulges his disgust) in his brutal article on the Vietnam War, *Why Americans Need To Kill Vietnamese or Somebody*, another discarded treasure that didn't survive this book's final edits owing to its simplistic deductions (Labadie was so enormously angry over the subject of the Vietnam War that he seemed to have lost all objectivity—in this otherwise powerful piece there were *numerous* “guilty” parties to the civil and international war in Vietnam and to place final

judgment on “banking interests” is a ridiculous and useless conclusion). One more modern nightmare that seemed to gnaw away at Labadie day and night was the looming threat of nuclear war between the United States and Soviet Russia, and in his cautionary fable *The Perpetuation Of The Human Race*, he laments (with ghoulish humor) the fact that such a brain-dead species managed to get their hands on such omnicidal weapons and parallels human extinction with the eventual heat death of the universe. Towards the end of his life Labadie began to regard humans as hardly distinct from bacteria and definitely no more important or elevated than bacteria in relation to the vastness of the cosmos. Humans, to Labadie, were nothing more than a Pavlovian collection of genes trying to reproduce and survive, an animal whose main motor functions, thoughts, and impulses are beyond conscious control (with certain rare, self-willed exceptions) and any project that aims to ameliorate the human condition falls against the basic caveat that there’s nothing to be saved.

Labadie was in some sense a prophet (or diagnostician of the apocalypse in-the-making) and the prognosis for prophets in any time or place has not been very good. Usually they’re condemned to the stake, thrown in asylums or simply deprived of the opportunity to be heard through various methods of marginalization. But to the detached onlooker who can dispassionately watch and laugh at the antics of the clowns striving to turn anarchism into a mass movement (within a culture of morons), Labadie’s jaded commentary regarding hopeful futures (in light of human limitations) is deliciously on the mark and fairly irrefutable. Modern anarchism (stripped of its former prestige) now works incessantly—and desperately—to give evidence of its good faith and relevancy, but it’s an anarchism devoid of **risk** and **difficulty**; undernourished, child-

ish, flattened, neutralized, and effectively bankrupt. Imprisoned by optimistic schemes (which are sustained by a quasi-religious faith exterior to their own self), burdened with puny thoughts, and satisfied with the mediocre pittance of contentment that cheerful forms of anarchism offer (“we’ll get there someday...”), the typical half-hearted anarchist scenester (with their craven adherence to the latest micro-trends in intellectual hipsterism) will contribute nothing thought-provoking to the fading anarchist project and will instead pursue their fifteen-minutes of subcultural fame before moving on to tenured teaching posts or cashing out the trust-funds they try so hard to conceal. Such is the actual state of anarchism in the US and to think otherwise is to be infected with the delirium of hope. Laurence Labadie looked into the black abyss of human pettiness and the terminal tenor of the writings in this final section (which all, nonetheless, still possess a wizened humanity) is a near-perfect coda for his growling, forty-year unpaid career as a writer and social critic. In small homeopathic doses Labadie’s purifying pessimism can help cut the reader free of a specious optimism that most forms of anarchism demand and—through its destruction of historical hopes in a never-to-be actualized future—open up an expanded arena of choice and action for individuals resisting the somnambulant seductions of mass society. Released from global ambitions and disconnected from the exhausted narrative of “remaking the world”, this approach to anarchism becomes a life-practice of willful self-creation and energetic individuality, carried out within the perishability of a planetary-wide human empire irremediably doomed to collapse. These qualities alone make Labadie worth reading.



## Infantile Radicalism

A mature person is one who has outgrown childish emotional impulses. He has learned about himself and his environment through personal experience, and has become able to control his emotional feelings in a rational manner. He has emerged from the sheltered dream world of childhood and been weaned to face reality. His reactions to people, situations in life, and ideas become reasonable, reflective, and contemplative. He has, as we say, grown up, become an adult.

Retarded or stunted development, caused by pampering childishness, the instilling of delusional hopes and fears, or by a too abrupt facing of life's obstacles, results in a reversion to the safeties of childhood, to a condition of arrested development, that psychologists call infantilism.

When we contemplate the fact that everyone aspires to a society in which he imagines *he* will be secure, we may readily understand man's utopias, and his impulse to "abolish" everything he does not understand. We may find the basis of the aspiration that everyone (this means me) will be "free" to do as he pleases, and "free" to supply his "needs" from the "society" of which he is a part.

In the light of the foregoing, the highly charged emotional reaction of some socialists and communists at the suggestion that liberty contemplates private property, exchange, competition, money, and wages is highly significant.

For what do these signify? Private property grants the individual the right of independence. Exchange implies reciprocity and equity (in contradiction to maternal and paternal benevolence). Competition is the freedom of choice to cooperate with whomever serves one best. The significance of money is that one pays for what one gets. And the meaning of wages is

that one gets paid for what he does.

In contrast to these aspects of maturity, collectivists of all shades aspire to abolish private property, because of the aversion to assuming independence. The communist abhors exchange because it implies a calculation of benefit proportional to effort. He detests money, preferring “free distribution”, out of the common pot. He abhors competition, because it implies a comparison of efforts of different worth. He dislikes wages, because he demands a living on the strength of being human, not in accordance with what he produces or offers.

The communist motto is: “*From each according to his ability to each according to his needs.*” What is this but the aspiration of the childish (the stupid and incompetent), hoping to live off the efforts of the able? Why the aversion to having calculations of benefit proportional to personal worth? What prompts reversion to the economics of the family wherein the helpless infant has all its needs satisfied by its parents?

Now communism, or the complete divorce between ability and effort, and corresponding benefits, and the benevolent paternalism of authority, are factors which must exist in the relation between parents and children. The very life of the helpless child depends solely on benevolence and love. The process of maturing consists in gradually outgrowing this relation. And among adults the economic relation is reciprocity, equity, the exchange of service for service. In short, complete departure from living off the efforts of others.

The child is incompetent and irresponsible. Weaning consists in amending these deficiencies. Thus the antipathy of the communist-minded to property exchange, competition, etc.—that is, to conditions through which, or under which,

calculations tending to uphold the natural relation of benefit proportional to effort—is purely an emotional response against responsibility. The subject has not completed the weaning process. Complexes and neuroses have stunted and warped his psyche and prevented an arriving at adulthood.

It is a startling commentary on the educational influences which the child confronts in the family, the church, and the school, to observe the prevalent alacrity which our people display in reverting to charity and the supposed benevolence of the paternalistic State for surcease from its aches and pains.

The analogy between child life and the aspirations of communists becomes obvious. Society is to become the group mother from which the individuals are to obtain sustenance through benevolence. The authority of the State is analogous to the father.

What is one to say, then, of the *emotional* (non-rational) antipathy to individualism? (The more “scientific” our reformers and revolutionists claim to be, the more deeply seated their feelingful hopes and fears may be found.) How can it be other than arrested emotional maturing—infantilism—childishness dangerous because it inevitably culminates, whatever may be the aspiration, in the authority of the supposedly benevolent Society (or State)? What is the psychological foundation for the universal superstition for the necessity of the State machine? Why the stampede to elect new and better papas to care for us? What are Monarchy, Democracy, Socialism, etc., but evidence of the universal usufruct of an effete “civilization”—the infantilism of the herd gone rampant?

Now, then, can these various mumbo jumbos of politicians be taken seriously were it not for the fact that prevailing economic insecurity throughout

the world has invoked reversion to the youthful hopes and dreams of the multitudes? The family, the church, and the school—do they not conspire to make the child obedient and docile? Are they not the instrument by which the immature are conditioned, imposed upon, and subjugated in mind? Are they not really the propagators of that communism which makes mankind supine before those monstrous joy killers—God and the State?

Communism is the childhood of Society; Individualism its coming of age.

*From Resistance,  
December 1949*

## **Why Do Men Fight and Destroy Each Other?**

If we would imagine a beautiful earth capable of supplying all of men's needs with the minimum of effort, it is almost impossible to conceive of them squabbling over what each one had. What would be the need? The idea simply couldn't have entered their heads.

But what would have happened if, in the earlier stages of man's evolution, a group or community found itself under the stress of famine, with food sufficient for only *half* its number? Don't you suppose they would each discover that what went into one man's belly did not nourish another? Isn't it reasonable to suppose that the self-interest

of each would impel him to garner enough for his own needs? If *some* were not impelled to do so, the whole community would starve and there would be no survival at all. Even were they to divide equally, it would mean mass suicide. At the very best, under the circumstances, only half of their number *could* survive.

Isn't it most plausible to imagine that the relations between people would rapidly devolve into one of scramble? In such a case of affairs, it is easily conceivable that the most hardy, the most ruthless—those with the least propensity to sacrifice—would survive. Probably some genius, no doubt the leader of sorts, would discover that in this scramble those who combined their efforts for mutual welfare, against the rest, would be even better prepared to survive the affray. Thus we would find that not only would the hardier specimens of humanity weed out the rest, but that the qualities conducive to success in warfare would be developed—strength, cunning, dissimulation, deceit, surprise, as well as the coordinating authority necessary for offensive warfare.

It is obvious that mere survival, under the conditions postulated, required the handicapping or destruction of rivals in acquiring the good things in life. Anti-social behavior, it would seem, therefore, is a direct consequence of *scarcity*. It is difficult to conceive of any other rational or natural cause of human conflict.

In the above-mentioned conditions are all the elements necessary for the origin of organized force used for predatory purposes. We might imagine another great mind, probably the greatest genius of all time, gradually discovering that it is not necessary to kill an adversary to get his goods, but that he may be weakened and left to work. There are the circumstances wherein we find the rationale for

the beginnings of society being divided into ruler and ruled, of the conquering aristocrats and the conquered subjects—which is to say the beginnings of the predatory organization which we now know as the State. We would expect the warrior to be one of the elect in such a society. We would expect him to be given the choicest morsels. And if not given him, he would naturally take them by brute force.

If, added to these reflections, we observe that life is a continual process of life devouring life, a stream of transference from the erstwhile living to those in the becoming stage—plants on the debris of former life, animals on plants and other animals—we are led to the conclusion that life bears a close resemblance to a struggle and a battle for existence, even when no overt force is used, even the living together involves a continual seething conflict of wills.

We may, of course, realize that this conflict could mellow into mere amicable differences of opinion. But at one time at least, violent conflict among humans had a rational basis. It not only permitted human survival but led to the eugenic elimination of the least clever and strong and cunning.

The question is whether our institutions and behavior today, since absolute scarcity has been surmounted, are at all rational or can be laid only to atavistic presuppositions. Why do we so willingly give our time and efforts in the interests of military governments? Why do we retain the State which increasingly continues to dominate and plunder us? Are its interests of self-aggrandizement, of more people and territory to rule and loot merely atavistic or inherent in its nature and purpose? Why do governments attempt to produce artificial scarcity if not with the subconscious belief that scarcity tends to rationalize their own reasons for being? Why politicians, the military, and all the paraphernalia

of the State if not in the blind expectation that, like the warrior of old, they may have a greater share of the cake?

Let's analyze some of man's feelings and impulses as we know them today. When someone hears of a calamity which has fallen upon others, especially supposed enemies, it gives him a satisfactory feeling—a realization that it was not *he* who experienced the discomfort. True enough, if he is of a sensitive nature, he may identify himself with that other and feel pain. But this pain is seldom if ever equal to the pain he feels when that ill has befallen himself, or those near to him. For the handicaps which others receive and experience subconsciously makes him feel that this has made him *relatively* superior in life's battle, and a glowing feeling of power pervades him. A similar feeling of power may, and evidently does, pervade when he himself can inflict disadvantage on others. Aren't these exhilarating feelings of power merely a hangover from periods of scarcity? What other reason can be discovered for man's apparent satisfaction in feelings of superiority, in the love of victory in conflict (and contest), other than the implication that one is better adapted and therefore better fitted to survive in the battle of life?

For although it is often true that one may get a feeling of power when, out of a superabundance of energy and ability, he can help others, here also, it is the feeling that one is, relatively at least better able to get by in the world—a feeling of power—from which he derives his joy. It would seem to be a hangover or historical immaturity.

Yes, overt conflict among humans, under certain conditions, would seem to be self-preservation and "bio-logical". But beside the natural impulse of self-preservation there is the urge of race preservation, manifesting itself in sex and gregariousness, with which we are all imbued. These impulses

often coincide, but sometimes conflict, forming a basic contradiction in the behavior of humans as regards their conduct toward each other—whether belligerent or amicable as the case may be. This may well be the origin of the love-hate complex, which in turn is often the spark for human contention. Are we to find that conflict has internal, subjective (psychological) causes as well as circumstances inhering in objective facts?

Living among others thus seems to involve at least two fundamental contradictions. One is that what goes into one's stomach does not nourish another, and that therefore scarcity promotes conflict as an essential for the continuance of the stream of life. The other is the contradiction between the urge for individual survival, and the racial urge within us. Where and whenever these fundamental urges do not coincide, conflict arises, sometimes only within the psyche when it constitutes those conflicts which form the basis for irrational neurotic and psychotic behavior. Or they may be overt when they break out into fighting and violence, including the major conflicts of civil strife and war.

To what extent are these latter due to atavistic propensities? How much to psycho-neurotic imperatives? How much to objective stimuli, such as economic causes? How, in any case, may they be avoided? The psycho-neurotic imperative for a belligerent disposition might be found in the inferiority-superiority complex, a generic term of behavior which expresses itself in various symptoms acting as compensating mechanisms. A subconscious feeling of inferiority must needs find compensation for some display of "superiority". Where could the feeling of inferiority arise from? Does it not arise from frustration and resulting fears? And from whence these?

We think they arise when the natural and



spontaneous expressions of the human are confronted by the inhibiting social *mores* in which he is born and raised. And who establishes those mores? They are to be found in what is termed common law, and what is statute law. The historical and social difference between these is that statute law originated in the relations between master and slave, between the conquered and their conquerors, that is to say, between the State and its subjects. Common law, on the other hand, arose among equals and was a general recognition of rules and practices required by social necessities. In the former case "law and order" was maintained in the form of restrictions for the purpose of enhancing the power and "take" of the master class. In the latter instance, it was a matter of *mutual* advantage, somewhat restrictive perhaps, but not necessarily so.

We take it that statute laws (such as those pertaining to sex, free expression, as well as free access to land, production, trade, etc.) are of a definitely frustrating nature. And that when the human animal is confronted with them, he sulks and rebels—and becomes belligerent (an outlaw). Hence the propensity to fight. Here again we find the State as culprit.

To summarize: Scarcity promotes a scramble and a fight, which in turn generates the State or evidence of a state of siege for purposes of plundering the conquered and using them for further conquest and plunder. We find that the State, even by definition, constitutes a monopoly of violence and thrives on turmoil and contention, which it naturally causes and promotes, playing meanwhile, with unique dissimulation and cunning, the role of maintainer of "law and order" and general beneficent provider.

We come to the question of pacifism, its utility and how it may be achieved. It would seem to be a biological axiom that any animal, including man, has

the prerogative to, or at least will be nature, defend himself against harm in any way he knows how and can. To deny this is to deny life itself. The practical question is whether and under what circumstances is violence practiced on another or others justifiable or expedient (as for instance in self-defense). It is difficult to agree with absolute pacifists who maintain that violence is *never* justifiable, even though one may agree that it is inexpedient in most cases.

We are here confronted with a fundamental law of human economy—the comparative relations between pains and resulting satisfactions, or between acts and their consequences. And the question is: Where different and conflicting interests between men and groups arise, when, where, why, and if ever does recourse to attempts toward mutual destruction or handicapping for the purpose of dissuasion, become feasible, expedient, justifiable, and indeed inevitable. Can it be rationally argued that modern war derives from scarcity? Are either of the present belligerent powers lacking in the materials necessary for the livelihood of “their” respective peoples? Who would gain by war as conducted by modern means?

To deny the absolute pacifist’s viewpoint commits one, it would seem, to justify, under certain conditions, recourse to a military type of organization, either as a standing institution or a temporary expedient. It would so commit one because of the greater effectiveness of organized warfare, with its strict authoritarian method of coordination for purposes of quick and decisive action—over sporadic action.

It would also commit one, in view of their effectiveness in warfare, to admit the sometime expediency of dissimulation, deceit, cunning, strength, surprise, treachery, and most of what are considered crimes *within* a group, as a final decisive

action between members of opposing groups. Against an enemy any means are feasible provided they are necessary or helpful in leading to victory.

Which leaves the realist today in rather a quandary, especially if he is of a pacific disposition. Especially is this so since most moderns, including radicals, think in terms of group mind and ideology. (It seldom occurs to them that the gregarious instinct is fruitful of as much harm as good.) Which means that they consider the group of more importance than the individual, as a matter of social policy. Which means, further, that they would *by principle* sacrifice the individual for the supposed common good. Which calls for obligation and duty on the part of the individual, in other words, group loyalty, patriotism, etc.

It would seem to this writer that so long as the group ideology remains *predominant* among people, culminating as it does in such divisions as nationalism, they cannot evade the dilemma posed in the foregoing paragraphs. As long as the State exists, in its various forms of vis-a-vis governments, decisions which are *supposed to be group interests* will inevitably arise. And these decisions will continue to be resolved by force of arms. To this writer, the very thought of a small group of persons, such as a government, presuming to speak in terms of *we* for a large agglomeration of persons who in the very nature of things could not possibly agree on a common course of action is the height of presumptuous absurdity. It can be thought of *actually*, only in terms of ruler and ruled (which is in fact what the relation between any government and "its" people really is). It can only be an exact replica of an invading group speaking for a collection of conquered subjects. The very fact that it *does* exist, the world over, glaringly demonstrates the subservience, incompetence, lack of self-respect,

and downright cowardice of the vast majority of mankind. There is mass fear of the organized coercion of the State, the very existence of which depends on their own credulous consent.

A genuine individualist will not fight for any cause without immediately asking himself: What am *I* going to get out of it in the event of the success of the battle? It does not seem to be worth much effort to argue that hardly anyone gets anything out of modern wars, as Hitler, Mussolini, and others would be very able to testify. Neither have the *people* of the winning nations much more than scars to show for their pains.

The actual effect of resorting to State-made decisions—the action and consequences of which devolve on masses of people—will be that most of those belonging to supposedly opposing groups will be coerced into conflicts in which they, *as individuals*, not only have no interest whatever, but actually have interests antagonistic to any supposed necessity for resorting to armed warfare. But as long as the State exists, these people will have little say in the conduct of their affairs.

What can wars mean today, therefore, other than conflicts between predatory groups, called governments, who coerce their subjects into fighting in order to preserve their (these governments') power and enlarge their dominion? The conclusion would seem to be, not only that armed warfare is an unavoidable concomitant of the division of people into nations, but also that individual liberty and well-being requires the abolition of the State, no matter what form it takes. The State itself, your State, is the enemy; not "alien" or "foreign" peoples whose predicament and credulity is the same as your own.

To this writer it would seem that the pacifist who was not opposed to the State, *as such*, would be indulging in the most inept kind of thinking

imaginable. To be governed is, by definition, to be coerced. It would hardly seem to be consistent for one to complain, say, of conscription, while at the same time acquiescing in the use of a coercive machine *as a principle of social policy*. And the same reason applies to the humanist. I would be anxious to hear either of these partisans explain any reason why they are other than opponents of the State. And yet I wonder how many of them could even begin to think of alternatives for implementing whatever social ideas they may have without recourse to the State machine!

If this article is provocative, it is hoped that it will induce some to stop and ponder.

*June 1950*

## What Is Man?

The human animal is an animated alimentary canal. He has evolved from and differs from the worm only by the appendages which have developed on him. These appendages are legs, by which his locomotion is presumably facilitated; arms, with which he may grab and hold the food and things which interest him; a head, which contains eyes, ears, and nose for knowing where it is at, also a brain with which he may rationalize his desires and hoodwink others to concede to him.

To do this latter his brain has invented many ingenious devices. One of these devices is the theory that everyone does, or rather should love one another. Living in a hostile world, man must needs dream of paradise wherein he will find the going

much easier than it actually is.

He invents and forms dope rings, called religions and run by clever gentry, which are intended to soften up his adversaries so that they may be “worked” more easily. He organizes gangs, called governments, by which some of them subdue, coerce and plunder the rest.

The natural antagonism between these evolved worms is concealed by various forms of camouflage and cunningly deceptive lies which find their expression in practices called marriage under which no worm may propagate or play at propagating unless given a license or blessing from some religious or governmental satrap (for a consideration of course).

The cunning feign naivete; the ignorant teach; the venal preach goodness.

These two-legged worms scratch lines on the globe which may not be crossed without the consent of the gangs called governments. They invent ingenious methods of exchange and then delegate their use to a few of the worms who wax fat by holding up the rest. None of the worms are supposed to use their brains except in the manners prescribed by the top gangs.

Altogether, they have constructed the strangest system of relations that even the fertile mind of God could hardly conceive. (God is that fellow, a glorified worm, who is supposed to have started and who mostly runs the whole works.)

The whole thing is a spectacle marvelous to gaze upon, that is, by someone not of the worm species.

And it's all for the purpose of keeping a stream of various materials coursing through these alimentary canals; and also to make more of their curious wriggly breed.

I don't see any particular value in being a man,

but these animals seem to take it as a matter of course, no matter what befalls them.

*September 1950*

## **"All The World's a Stage"**

The outstanding characteristic of human beings as distinguished from other animals is their prodigious propensity to kid themselves. The studies of psychologists would seem to be manna for the cynic. For we find that, aside from the primary urges, nearly all of the intense impulses of humans stem from feelings of inadequacy, of the lack of function of the potentialities within them.

The genius is oftener than not merely an ordinary person motivated by a fear that he will not have a sufficiently important role in the drama, farce, or comedy of life (as you will) and strives to compensate for his feeling of insignificance by an intense development of his potentialities, usually only one.

Your weakling will tend to formulate a philosophy of power. Your educator subconsciously suspicious of his own ignorance and wants to compensate by teaching, since teaching is a profession which explicitly implies superiority of knowledge. Your religious fellow is motivated by feelings of guilt. Your all-around misfit wants to revolutionize the world into such a form as he will be secure in. None of these worthies are able to face the fact that life is a battle and to take their roles in melee, such as it is. Your exhibitionist needs an audience; your victim of the love-hate complex needs to have some rascality

in his make-up to justify.

We learn from psychology that the infant is an unfeeling beast, a selfish brat ostensibly on the make and who cares not a whit from where he gets his sustenance. He remains such until he is indoctrinated by his elders. His parents realize that if he does not disguise his predatory instincts he will be “caught” and carefully guarded against by his peers. His teachers, puppets of the powers-that-be, naturally teach patriotism, love of country and God, to soften him up for use by his masters, Church and State, who intend to exploit him for all it’s worth.

As we grow older, we ourselves, natural brutes though we be, learn to dissimulate and camouflage our healthy impulses by politeness; we develop schemes of ethics and by pretense attempt to allay each other, so that, when the opportune time comes, we are easier to waylay. Make no mistake that basically we care precious little about one another except for what we can get out of each other.

Stop to consider. Of all the animals man is the only one who deliberately enslaves and murders his kind for no sensible reason. You will find missionaries searching the world over for someone to convert. Christians, believers in the most monstrous conglomeration of nonsense, have been most active in this nefarious enterprise. But don’t be gulled; they are only the forerunners of the military and economic exploiter. History gives no evidence otherwise.

Your reformer and zealot, who presumes to love everybody, does not hesitate a whit to slaughter anyone who disagrees with him. The love-hate complex here comes in force in all its pristine glory. People are neatly divided into down but forward-lookers, generally the rag-tag of humanity, and the devils-on-wheels who manage to grab nice chunks from the common trough.



Your military, if it were not subservient cannon fodder for sly knaves, might play an overtly candid role in the human drama, if they divided the spoil among themselves. But they are too stupid for this, and become mere mercenaries. They are so the world over.

Next on the list of rascals are the politicians, although it is a moot question whether the priesthood are not entitled to this position. Indeed, it is not so certain that they shouldn't come first. But let's not quarrel over that. These gentry are the slyest of the lot. To get by through chicanery is the height of human ingenuity, and your minister of the gospel is the cream of the crop.

Your radical, of whom I happen to be of the number, is nine times out of ten a weakling and a pathetic individual with a tremendous urge to be a teacher and a leader. Were he naturally such he would not have such an inordinate urge to be one. Schemes of something for nothing seem to be his special field.

If you are incompetent, if indeed you cannot stand on your own feet and never earned an honest sandwich in your life, aspire to be a politician. Among the saps and knaves of which this world is composed, your sailing will be easy. The way to the presidency or dictatorship is assured you.

Oh yes, psychology will be the undoing of all of us. Our roles will be dissected, the play will fall apart, yet the show must go on until the final appearance when the understudies will emerge upon the scene.

"All the world's a stage and each man in his time plays many parts." The drama, it would seem, has been written by some cosmic joker.

*May 21, 1950*

## Education—What For?

Discussions about education blandly assume the necessary existence of buildings, classrooms, teachers, pupils, and a curriculum. But education in fact is something which everyone acquires every day and hour in life. Everything we experience educates us in some way. That is to say, something impinges itself upon us, and there is an impression made which evokes some kind of reaction, with appropriate consequences, and the whole episode is recorded upon something we call our memory (whether conscious or subconscious), and probably is correlated with other impressions we have received. It appears to be an exceedingly complicated and mysterious phenomenon—education.

Be all this as it may, it almost never occurs in such discussions to suppose the complete abolition of formal or schoolroom education. Why indeed should this appear so silly? Of course, it will appear silly to professional educators, but I am speaking about the rest of us.

Speaking for myself, much of what I learned in school I found out later was pretty much nonsense. But it was much more difficult to unlearn this stuff than it was to learn it. I had to unlearn it, however, before something sound could take its place. Here was a terrific waste of effort which might have been avoided if I hadn't been "educated" in the first place. Moreover, the things I learned afterwards were things I was interested in and did not need to be disagreeably pounded into me. Most of what I "know" I got outside the schools, soaking much of it up in day by day contacts.

Frankly, I really cannot see where I would have been much worse off, if any, without any formal education at all. No doubt everyone has heard someone express the same idea at one time or another.

Specialization has gone so far as to erase versatility. Most of us are salesmen, or motormen, or executives, or nut-tighteners, and not much of anything else. Few of us stop to consider what's the sense of what we are doing, and I suspect that at least three-quarters of what people are engaged in doesn't really amount to anything, if it isn't downright pernicious.

I also have a suspicion that if formal education were abolished, there would arise in its place forums where people would get together to discuss things, to inaugurate laboratories to experiment with and test some of the theories and ideas that occurred to them, to construct things, etc. All in all a voluntary spontaneous developing of thought would arise to supplant much of that formal, dull, specialized caricature which is called the school system today. And who knows, maybe even teachers would get to know something themselves.

I have not too much difficulty in imagining that the inane, vacuous "conversation" which goes on when people get together in homes, cocktail parties and the like would cease, if for no other reason than that schools which educate us how to be stupid had ceased to exist.

Is anybody of even limited experience going to deny that the driest, dullest, most boring stuff put into books is writ by professional educators? Considering their numbers, how many professional pundits can you name who ever really amounted to much?

I have listened to several radio programs dealing with the education question, by those in the educational system, and about all they could talk about with any vim and conviction was if only teachers would be paid more money. From the top to the bottom, college presidents to truant officers, what they couldn't do in the way of "education" if

they weren't subjected to such stinginess in funds. They may be right, but somehow I developed a sour taste in my mouth.

Parents would appear to be the natural teachers of the child, but one wonders what would happen to filial respect when the alert, inquisitive mind of the child meets the vacuity of mind not uncommon among parents. The economic pressures which are causing the break-up of home life are not conducive to the education for sane living which some deem so important. It is no secret that kindergarten and some primary grades appear to be for the purpose of "keeping the kids off the street" or a place to stow them so that the parents might get a respite from the annoyance of the little brats. Truly the sins of the parents are visited down even to the fourth generation.

Before we go haywire pouring more funds into the educational mills, I propose for serious consideration the complete abolition of the educational system, and contemplation of what would arise in the supposed void.

*November 9, 1958*

## **Regarding Man's Concern with Truth**

The human mind is so constituted that, given a modicum of experience in living, it forms within itself, as categories, a distinction between reality and illusion. The expression of reality, usually in words, he calls truth, and the converse of truth is error or a

lie. These are primary elements of thought, behind which there can be no analysis of cause.

In order to cope with the external world, it is important for a man to understand its reality, so that he may act accordingly if he expects to obtain what he desires (if anyone really knows what he wants). To live successfully he is vitally interested in truth.

But in his relationship with other men, whose interests often diverge from his, to the extent to make them contestants, it is not to his interest to have those others as smart as he is. And therefore it is not always to his interest to tell others the truth. In fact, quite the contrary.

Thus, we see with man, as with other animals and plants, such subterfuges and deceptions as camouflage, bluff, secrecy, baiting, lying in wait, surprise, and pouncing on the unwary. In the natural world it is a vast devouring spree with life living on life, or thriving on decomposed remains of life, a whole process which is sometimes called the life cycle.

A similar phenomenon obtains with and among the human species. Practiced at all times when we are in the company of others, we are putting on some kind of act, even unconsciously, to aggrandize ourselves, and to put others in unwary positions, a sort of universal pretense or lying. We each want what we want, and if “appearing natural” or telling the truth serves our purpose—OK; but if not, not. Even an infant learns the process quickly and becomes one of the shrewdest and almost telepathic organisms in its game to “use” its parents—until it is taught how to be stupid.

Of course we invent the pretense and inject into our professed *mores* that everyone should tell the truth, but the subconscious motive for this exhortation is the hope that the fellow will be impressed, and be naïve enough to follow it, in which event it would

save us the wear and tear of being continually on the alert. Often, we even fool ourselves.

In an ordinary world one would suppose that all this would be tacitly understood, and we would not be so gullible as to be gulled by others. But instead of even such naturalness, we try to manufacture dubs wholesale, by indoctrinating or trying to indoctrinate into believing that “the truth will make you free” and injecting fears that if one cannot be truthful one will suffer—if not in this world then in the next. It is almost safe to say here that there is no individual alive who hasn’t in some form or another been indoctrinated with such nonsense, which paradoxically makes life more difficult for all. Such indoctrination might well in fact be the basic cause of such disintegrations of personality as are known as neuroses. That is to say, individuals who have been indoctrinated with impossible morals, considering the world in which they must live, have therefore developed internal conflicts, have impulses working at cross purposes and so are woefully deficient and inefficient in making their way in the world.

The truth will make you free. The hell it will. Most likely it will make you the dupe of others and may land you in the hoosegow, or on the gibbet, as has happened to too many who have spoken their piece—while liars and rascals have risen to be the cream of society. They are the ones who have been eating the pie and cake while the indoctrinated or gullible ones have been groveling in the gutter.

The whole complex of civilization is a fabric of truth and lies, quite a pattern, with the Church, the State, law and justice, medicine men and psychologists, advertising and selling, marriage, education, and all the rest of it nicely woven into the tapestry. To be a success in this world one needs to “use one’s wits.” The profession of politics consists in fooling the public; and the purpose of a diplomat is

to outwit his compeers of other countries. Anyone to whom one needs to press this point must be exceedingly naïve indeed.

Talking about human relations a la Aristotle and other pundits—apart from their being tools and weapons serving the will-to-live—is pious and pompous nonsense. The reaction which the realism of a Machiavelli evokes in us only proves with what terror we face the facts of life—thanks to the teaching of those in authority who thrive best on the gullibility and fears of those caught under their jurisdiction.

Brutal parents insist that their children tell the truth under dire threats of what will happen to them if they are caught telling a lie. Since they cannot win love, respect, and confidence because of their own unlovely characters, they resort to coercion, too stupid to realize that by their threats they are promoting the very untruthfulness that they desire to avoid. A loving and honest parent does not have to preach truthfulness to his children; they learn it by example and by being treated honestly and fairly. But to deny the child the opportunity to defend himself by telling an untruth, is to disarm him in his battle for life. An overprotected child or terrified child is going to have a tough going in his relations with others. Grown-ups are the greatest liars, and to not a few, their very professions depend on trickery of some sort or another. If your child tells you a lie, the fault if there be any is yours, not his.

Am I preaching deception? Not at all. I am merely stating facts that anyone with both feet on the ground should be cognizant of if he doesn't want to be an unwitting promoter of the very duping process which is crucifying all of us.

I think the foregoing is about as subversive a statement as might be made, yet it seems to me that those who do not realize the sense of it are plain

fools. Incidentally, it may be useful to seriously suspect the self-righteous souls who, to satisfy their craving for the approbation of others, find it expedient to go about “doing good” in the world. This is particularly applicable to politicians and in fact to the whole State apparatus. The extent of the dupery in the world may be estimated by contemplating the truth that in reality the State is little more than a juggernaut robbing and grinding the benighted souls which it holds in its power. And still so many idolize it!

There need be no hope that man will ever be an “honesty machine”; the very nature of things has destined him to be pretty much of a deceiver—or to perish. More’s the pity.

*November 1958*

**Thoughts Evoked by Reading  
Nineteen Seventeen:  
*The Russian Revolution Betrayed* by Voline**

I have read enough about utopian plans and hopes, I think, but the outline of a successful revolution as appears on pages 26-29 of this book is the most fantastically improbable thing I have ever read.

As long as “communist anarchists” and syndicalists (as with socialists and communists) stayed in the field of critical appraisal of any status quo, they were on safe and valid grounds. The Socialistic movement is, in the first instance, a movement of protest. But when they began to launch plans for



the future, invariably they started to on the road of repression and reaction. Their first acts of a reactionary and anti-libertarian nature stem from the fact that they all believe in the complete abolition of “private property”, exchange, competition, and other principles which, when correctly understood, are inseparably connected with the freedom of the individual.

The first thing that might be realized by anyone with consequential ability to think is that Anarchism will always be a minority movement. No matter what the nature of the regime they might find themselves in, those who are genuine anarchists will be able to point out some violations of liberty. There will never be a purely anarchist society, if indeed anyone knows what that might be.

Such being the case, and it also being true that any opposition can be squelched or stopped (even though only temporarily) by force, it is obvious that if the opposition or a sufficient portion of it be liquidated, the movement of that opposition will be retarded. Therefore the almost religious belief as the first tenet of “communist-anarchism” in the necessity of “The Revolution”, that is to say a violent change in a societal regime, is tantamount to subscription to their own suicide. How many times this must be proven in history before the libertarian believers in violent overthrow of the social order see the light is a deep and serious question. Some people never learn.

It is not to be assumed by the above that the slaughter of anarchists by Lenin, and Stalin, could have been avoided. I only say that if they had adequate understanding they wouldn't have been so surprised by it, and for that matter may have made better provisions for their own protection.

Substantially all the great revolutions eventuated in a worse political regime than what had pre-

ceded it. Wherever any apparent gains were made, they were merely validations of what had already taken place in an evolutionary course of events. Let's all be honest, and ask: What revolutions ever did more than legitimize what was already a *fait accompli* at best, or give birth to something worse? To be completely frank, the writer hasn't the faintest idea about any practical or probable thing that might be done to merely stem the prevailing trend toward oblivion, let alone getting anything better. The status quo, in America at least, seems to be too firmly entrenched to even get a hearing for any reform.

The next serious question in regard to the revolutionary course of events is the almost fatalistic belief that they will be, in any event, progressive. This is the practical meaning of historical materialism, as expounded by communists, especially of the Marxian persuasion.

This blind faith can and should be seriously challenged as a reliable social-revolutionary doctrine, for it has penetrated and become a stock-in-trade tenet of historians and professors of "social science". It appears quite possible and in fact is almost a practice in America today to so arrange matters that practically everyone has a stake in the regime, or **thinks** he has. Far from being a hotbed for revolution, it is the precise opposite—especially in a world that is in turmoil and in worse condition everywhere. It makes burning feel less painful when one observes someone else in a hotter part of the fire.

For what is the apparent major issue in the United States today, aside from the Russian menace? It is the relatively mild question of integration in the schools. This furnishes a nice ground for the innocuous activity of self-styled revolutionists, but is certainly no ground for revolution. As for the

so-called cold or hot war between the “communist” and “free world” blocks, is it not apparent that these two regimes mutually support each other? If it were not for the alleged menace of each for the other, very little of the military and economic measures being performed by each would have any reason for existence.

It seems to be a common belief that the main thing preventing a holocaust from happening is the near certainty that those who should start it would themselves be probably among the first victims. This is pretty shaky ground wherever there is a large gob of neurotic hope and feelings of righteousness among those in the respective governmental saddles.

The apostles of revolution should occasionally lay down their pipes and try to get a glimpse of reality.

*January 5, 1959*

## On Man's Thinking

There is a great deal of misconception about the way man thinks. Except in rare instances, men do not think about or have ideas inimical to the way they live their lives. Every individual necessarily has interests and these interests determine not only what they think about, but also how they think about it, and what their conclusions are. No person can think objectively about anything in which he is personally involved. All so-called objective or scientific thinking deals with things and matters over which man presumably has no control. There is no accident in the fact that scientists are irresponsible

people, because in order to do scientific or objective thinking it is necessary not to be involved. And of course my definition of non-involvement almost means non-responsibility. The scientist is not responsible for his findings, since they supposedly inhere in the nature of things, and therefore are beyond his control.

The conclusion stares one in the face that substantially all of what man considers his thinking is merely rationalizing. He rationalizes his desires, his actions, and his predicament if it happens to be one which he can cope with or which is advantageous to him even though it be disadvantageous to others. Man justifies, validates and excuses whatever he wants to do, or what circumstances force him to do, or what and where in his opinion his interests lie whether this opinion be conscious or subconscious.

There is of course nothing new in what I'm saying. There are probably thousands of expressions throughout literature which show that what I am saying has been known. Isn't there an expression that no man can see the mote in his own eye? It is the simplest thing in the world to see the faults of others at the very same time that we cannot see the very worst deficiencies in ourselves, or in the members of our circle or group.

A practical point to be derived from the above is the need for considering before listening to or reading what anyone says, to ask: what are his circumstances in life; what axe is he grinding; what is he trying to prove; and why? Who is he; what are his interests; what makes him tick? When we consider these aspects of communication, we are careful not to take any man too seriously. And, incidentally, it would be well to take into consideration one's own situation in life before assuming that one is able or competent to learn anything from certain other individuals. It is often, if not usually, the case that

two persons are each in such predicaments that they cannot learn anything from each other, even if both are saying the truth.

“What is Truth?” asked Pilate; but he did not wait for an answer. He probably knew damn well what “truth” was to the person of whom he asked the question. There could be ten different “truths” coming from as many different persons, and none of these alleged truths the real truth. As yet man has not invented a truth machine, and perhaps he never will, because if the machine has to get its information or data from humans, it already is obliged to work or think with doctored or biased data. By the way, is there any significance to the expression that when anything is messed-up it is said to have been doctored?

Some of the stuff I have written in criticizing the ideas of others was to the effect that, in view of their positions in life, they were unable to or would not think effectively.

Now I want to expose a contradiction, which may incidentally contribute to the gradual understanding of the philosophy of contradiction which happens to be an important aspect of my schemata of thought.

The contradiction is this: that while man cannot think objectively or “disinterestedly” about things which concern him, neither can he think about things which do not interest him. He simply is not curious enough about them to give them a moment’s thought, even supposing he was aware of them; he just does not care about them, feeling that there are things of more importance to him to think about.

Man is thus on the horns of a dilemma that more or less inheres in the nature of things. The things he is not interested in and which presumably he could contemplate objectively, he finds

unprofitable for him to deal with. Whereas the things which do concern him, and which if he is not an escapist he must necessarily face, he is obviously incompetent to deal with objectively. He is thus as a thinking machine almost condemned to a degree of ignorance and idiocy.

My late writings attempt to show that this is so, not merely from a philosophical point of view, but in actuality. I have shown in several places that the immediate interests of most people is such that substantially everyone has a stake in and is almost inevitably contributing to the eventual annihilation of mankind. I have shown that Liberty, under which a tendency toward equilibrium would always be operative, got sidetracked during the course of man's evolution, and that institutionalized coercion and violence became established as the *modus operandi* for the conduct of affairs of humans. And that this contravention of the natural liberty of man, by its replacement by the State, has so changed or obliterated this tendency, that the result has been the arrival at a predicament which is past the point of no return; and that the terminal of this process is utter and mutual extermination.

The denouement is doubly assured because of the fact that everywhere Liberty, instead of being advanced, is increasing becoming extinguished.

Incidentally, the vision which appears at the end of this longer range of telescopic view can only be obtained by the very sort of integrated and operational thinking which I have been insisting upon, as opposed to the fractionalized, disconnected, compartmentalized and static way of thinking which is characteristic of Borsodi and many others. With organic phenomena the salient question is function; thinking realistically about it requires an awareness of movement, of tendencies, and of a dynamic point of view. For obviously only when we can think is it

possible to predict the future.

One might also predict his own actions, which are hardly at one's command, because it is impossible for anyone to decide upon or determine what the influences and circumstances are to be, which any one of us must face. To counter-influence these requires a much more comprehensive understanding and power than any one possesses. And yet these circumstances are going to determine our reactions and behavior, simply because man discounts the future in favor of the present and perhaps in most cases rightly. He certainly is not going to act in accordance with what is called free will, if such action means his immediate extinction.

What am I saying, in substance? I am saying that man in the past has inadvertently established a permanent institution which is static in its nature, which tends to resist change, which fundamentally is based on coercion and violence for the specific purpose of slavery and exploitation, the suppressive nature of which has caused the distortion and mutilation of the human psyche, and which has got into operation intangible and inscrutable forces that man is neither aware of nor understands, but of which he is the inevitable victim.

The establishment was inadvertent, not the product of either his immaturity or neuroses, nor of any hypothetical "original sin," but simply because of ignorance and stupidity. For man is neither good nor bad, but egoistic and endowed with an inscrutable will-to-live. Nor can anyone be blamed for ignorance. The criminal institution which we call the State was fortuitous in its origin and devastating in its effects, seconded only in its deleterious influence by organized religion.

Do you for one moment claim that a half dozen or a dozen pompous idiots at a "summit" conference are going to or can reconcile the insane

confrontation of which they are the embodiment? Or that this can be true because 2 billion imbeciles believe it to be true, and if only I say that it is not true?

Or that I am mistaken if I say, what I cannot prove, that in this year of our lord 1960, the relations between humans are such—have gone so far in the direction of degeneracy—that any hope for the continuance of life on this planet is quite negligible?

Even if it were granted that the master-slave relationship was inevitable or even natural, and that such relationship be unified, universalized, and complete, the fact seems obvious that the various masters at the present time, on both sides of the cold war and in between, have not and do not seem to agree to unite upon any given scheme by which to hoodwink, coerce, and exploit the masses of mankind.

Without mentioning the others, if the Pope and Mr. Krushchev, for instance, can come to some agreement upon which they can unite their operations (with of course including other so-called leaders), then it is conceivable that the mass of mankind, who actually believe in slavery of one sort or another, will be spared an atomic holocaust. For the unavoidable outcome of the tendencies now in operation is either the slavery of totalitarianism or complete annihilation.

*December 26, 1960*

**War, War, War.**



It has been maintained by persons of no mean intellectual acuteness that the world is one big battlefield, and that to the victor belongs the spoils. It has been said that the strong and virile in this universal conflict win, while the weak and timid bemoan it as they nurse their scars. It ill behoves the wise man to take sides in the battles between idiots. For who among humans is so hardy that a clout on the skull might not silence him and put him out of business. And when the devil is sick, the devil a saint would be.

And besides, those who are endorsing the call to battle are almost invariably politicians and generals of the arm-chair variety, who direct the slaughter from the sidelines of their bunkers, and usually die in bed. Indeed, the sniping at or snuffing out of heads of State and other “leaders” in the battles for “national sovereignty” is considered just about one of the major crimes—something like the denial of the existence of God or the thumbing of one’s nose at Big Brother.

And yet battle is a constructive thing if it is a free-for-all or what is usually called anarchy or chaos. For it is with the clash of ideas, the bitter contests and conflicts of opinion, and the competition between various sorts of activities, out of which, considered as a process, truth and betterment constantly arise. Or do we need “knowledgeable and humanistic leaders of cooperative persuasion” to solve our problems for us? And is peace analogous with death?

Who wants the dull conformity and stupid subservience of bee-hive socialism, wherein all contest is suppressed and submerged into obedience to a centralized bureaucratic power elite, or even decentralized authority? What sort of human culls are so comatose as to desire that the optimization of impudence and crime known as the State should be

the caretaker of the “health, education, and welfare” of a horde of non-entities known as a “nation”? And how do these blatherskites who profess to be our protectors and nursemaids get into power except by catering to the precise sort of culls they profess to bottle-feed? Why is it that Americans cannot realize their own degeneration as they ask for the same sort of nursemaid society that had to be enforced at the point of a bayonet on the Russian populace? One would think that civilization is measured in terms of refrigerators and TV sets and the absence of outside privies.

Oh, yes, we do not see the politicians and heads of governments taking up arms and cudgelling each other for God and Country. Hell no, and why should they when they can get 18 year olds to do so? And these valiant fatherland saviours will supply modern arms to the Hottentots and the Congolese so that they may kill each other off, at the behest of their politicians, in the gamble that some of these politicians or commissars or capitalists will eventually land in the drivers seat and get the frosting off the cake. This little enterprise is called exporting “our way of life” to the benighted heathen who is “not ready for liberty”—or self-government, whatever that is. The 64 dollar question is: Which is it going to be, the American brand of paradise, or the Communist brand. Shut your eyes and take your choice; or no, here are the guns boys, fight it out for yourselves, and thank us for giving you the means to settle your problems. Do I see the banking fraternity snickering on the sidelines as they count the day’s receipts? Or didn’t you know that it all had to be “financed”? Incidentally, do you know what the hell I’m talking about?

*May 10 1961*

## What Hath God Wrought?

Sometimes I wonder what God was doing during the eons and eons, back into infinity, before he suddenly conceived the idea of creating a globule and populating it with lunatics. I wonder, too, why he chose us. It really furnishes an unending source of wonder why such an individual (or is it three?), with infinite power, infinite knowledge, and infinite goodness did not use these qualities in his work. Was he tired? Did he need amusement? Has he sadistic impulses? Was he bored by the long years of nothingness?

Why did he send his own son to this planet to be murdered and eaten? That seems to be an unusual idea. Does God tire of perfection and want to observe incongruity in action? No, that cannot be, because, knowing everything, he must see the results beforehand.

Perhaps he has in his day made many worlds. Square worlds, Triangular worlds. Dry and wet worlds; light and dark ones. Perhaps he has made them of sorts of which we cannot even imagine. What urges is he satisfying in his endless experiments? Yet he must know, since he knows everything.

It must be terribly boring to be God. Since he is all that could be, there is no room for improvement. He has less chance than we in this respect. Is he lonely, without any peers?

Yes, being God is certainly something, but I wonder what? I often cogitate: What makes God tick? That is probably the question that was asked of the sphinx, and why the sphinx was made of stone unvocal.

*1961*

## As Regards Cosmology

Who is to say that the earth isn't the condensation of one of God's farts, and the effluvia on its surface isn't the coating of one of this gentleman's diarrhetic shits; and the fauna on its surface (that's us) aren't analogous to maggots which have germinated from it? Isn't this as plausible a story as that promulgated by theologians of various denominations; and of the speculations of "scientific" guessers about a big bang theory, or whatever—men who conceitedly claim to know about events which have happened millions of years in the past? But who haven't the faintest understanding of what exists before their eyes?

All I know about the matter is what I read in the papers, edited by editorial pricks who, whatever they may say, are obviously hired hacks who prostitute whatever ability they may have in dabbling with words; or out of books written by professorial jerks who, after all, are mere competing proponents of theological myths--all of those worthies are only two-legged shit manufacturing apparati who will do anything whatsoever in order to get the wherewithal to convert into shit.

Let's face it! Isn't it easy enough to consider the populace of, say, New York City as perambulating so-and-so's with semen dripping from their lips? There are more goddam societies, organizations, and individuals sending out tons of subsidized mail soliciting funds from people who presumably don't know how to spend their own money, but who should send it to pathetic creatures who couldn't run a peanut stand successfully, who would like a hand in the disbursement of it, that is, whatever portion of it that doesn't stick to their own gooey fingers! Not having a mob of good tax-collectors who can get money from you by the threat of confiscation of our income or property, these professional do-

gooders must perforce play upon your sympathies for the poor and downtrodden in Hagopagoland. But these same crummy bastards would be the first to protest against anything being done in other benighted portions of the earth that would actually consist of getting monopolistic sonsabitches off the necks of the very persons that they pretend to be so solicitous about. And as a matter of plain and obvious fact, all the various crocodile tear shedders over the peasants in Viet Nam would prefer to have these very same peasants slaughtered by the thousands before allowing them to entertain any prospects of relieving themselves from the very predicament they are in, which predicament happens to be the result of predatory incursions of outsiders.

I am speaking specifically about the United States government, the economic interests which constitute the financial, industrial, and military complex of the United States, which may I tell you means **you** and **me** and every other goddam bastard who bears the cognomen "American". Who the hell are **you**, reader? Whatever goddam imbecility you happen to be engaged with, you are absolutely nothing more than a shit-manufacturing maggot, bent on getting yours, completely unconcerned about whomever may be slaughtered in the general process out of which you get the material to be animated ass-holes.

What did the Vietnamese peasant do to you that you should serve the beckoning's of various criminals, including righteous-minded Conservative pricks, who dragoon you into the operation of slaughtering these peasants. You crummy bastard (and me too), your only concern in this life is to keep your ass-hole functioning; and the only advice I have for you is to get wise to what you are, and not kid yourself that you are the chosen of God, or the lucky recipient of hunks of God as digestible material, proffered

to you by some infallible fragment of one of God's turds, like the Pope.

*October 12 1965*

## **Stirner!**

There are not very many people who can intelligently understand Stirner. The reason is the "Judeo-Christian ethic" which dominates the viewpoints of people in the western hemisphere. They are nothing if not moralists. Whereas Stirner is primarily an amoralist. The basic thesis of his viewpoint on the motivation of humans is self-interest. And self-interest is for the most part an amoral impulse. It is intrinsically a philosophy of expedience—one does what the circumstances call for in the enhancement of one's will-to-live. This may or may not conform to some moral abjuration. And no amount of moral indoctrination is going to deter the individual from taking advantage of the circumstances which confront him. Let others do likewise.

It is only on the idealistic plane that "Society's" interest coincides with the respective interests of the individuals who compose it. Elemental use of one's intelligence suggests that on no other grounds can the course of history be understood. Nor can any of the common crimes be explained by any other criterion. Deception, bluff, coercion, robbery, and murder—either on a small or large scale—are always motivated by the impulse to better one's self. And the physical, mental, and "spiritual" incompetent is the first one to look for some transcendent power to take care of him (the God ideal). And while common

sense should suggest to anyone that if power be given to some “authority” to take care of one’s self, it is a foregone conclusion that such power will be used in the first instance to aggrandize the well-being of the power-holder.

We believe that man is evil, and yet elect some to rule over others. Who other than an indoctrinated boob will subscribe to such a scheme? And yet we find the practice a virtual world-wide phenomenon!

In the face of this almost universal superstition, the voice of Stirner comes like a breath of fresh air. It is because this admonition to take care of one’s self infuriates the superstitious hopes of such herd viewpoints as communism, socialism, and collectivism in general, including the pious frauds who claim to believe in “free enterprise”—moralists all. How could these pathetic creatures stomach or even understand Stirner? The rationale for the herd or collective impulse must be searched for on other grounds than individual self-interest. For there is a rationale.

Notwithstanding that Stirner stressed the fact that the “ego” was **not** an **abstract generality**, that there were as many “egos” as there were individuals, and that each ego was different—socialists even of the Marxian variety had to insist otherwise in order to dismiss Stirner as a metaphysician. Marx, who was a theologian if ever there was one, had the disreputable knack of pretending to hold the ideas of his opponents, and then to use these ideas to confute them—thereby imputing to his opponents the exact opposite of what they believed. This is the role of the ideological trickster, often unbeknownst to himself.

What goes into one man’s stomach does not nourish another man, and in a circumstance of absolute scarcity morality goes by the board. Men’s interests conflict and a scramble results. It is inherent in the situation, and Christians and communists,

moralists both, are confronted with a situation wherein their nicely-spun “commandments” go fluttering in the breeze. And they are just as much victims of a situation as anyone else. As a matter of fact the greatest amount of wholesale slaughter has been committed by Christians and communists. What communist didn’t believe that his idealistic utopia didn’t have to come about after a revolutionary holocaust in which the bad guys had to be eliminated by the good guys? It is in this context that the present violent confrontations and impending mutual slaughter find their rationale. Man is a victim of habit and institutionalism.

*December 1966*

## **Is There an Absolute Truth**

There is a rather hot debate going on between persons who believe in “Absolute Truth” and others who hold to “Ethical Relativism”. Like most arguments this debate has degenerated into a battle of words, and the basic positions of the adversaries have become relegated to a murky hinterland. The argument has become increasingly hazy in that it has involved a disregard of a differentiation between means and ends.

From my point of view, the fundamental proposition upon which all human action rests is the validity of the idea of Expediency. This idea covers both means and ends. Except for the general principle of human betterment, any subsidiary idea regarding either means or ends must rest upon a pragmatic practice. And the first point of divergence



in regard to the meaning of human betterment is whether the solution is to be found in collectivism or whether it depends upon the liberty of the individual. Since all collectivist schemes involve a *system* of one sort or another, whereas individual liberty implies the absence of an imposed system, the point of the argument rests right here. What is the “Absolute Truth” on this score? Those who fail to see this fact are hardly competent to enter the argument. For how can there be any dialogue between those whose assumptions are in direct contradiction?

But even calling Expediency the basic law of human action, superior to and even including both the collectivistic and individualistic points of view, does it mean the complete absence of principle, at least as far as means are concerned? Assuredly not, for the *means* of attainment of any end would depend upon circumstances. Tucker said that “Consequences are the only God”. The meaning obviously is that the *same* means may result in entirely *different* consequences, depending on the circumstances in which one finds himself. It is not uncommon to hear that all generalizations have their exceptions; and that while “The Truth will make you free” may be a handsome motto to be imprinted on a banner, the simple fact is that it is not always true. I have elsewhere commented on the simple biological observation that camouflage, dissimulation, deceit, even lure are practices indulged in by the most elemental forms of life, as a means of mere survival. And unless sacrifice is placed upon a higher pedestal than survival, it is the crudest advocacy of suicide for anyone to place any “Absolute Truth” above life itself. And as a matter of observable fact, it is precisely the urging of the *other fellow* to commit suicide (for one’s own ends), which exposes the advocates of “Absolute Truth” to be the vilest of frauds and deceivers. For what he means

by "Absolute Truth" is his own opinion of what is conducive to *his own* well-being. He is quite willing to save his hide while treading over the bodies of those whom he hopes to bamboozle. We find this propensity almost the *sine qua non* of "patriotism" and religious fervor. Those who are so cock-sure of what "the general welfare" is, or who claim to have a pipeline to the almighty, are quite eager to encourage others to the slaughter. They will gratuitously do the thinking and the deciding. The supposed entity about which these helpful persons are solicitous is "We", for the benefit of whom they will urge, "Let's you and him fight." Let's pity the poor boob who has been energized to action by this piece of con. If he doesn't move with alacrity and do what he is told, the urgers will bloody well see that force will be used against him if he hesitates. The believers in "Absolute Truth" are the epitome of authoritarianism and the exponents of the use of violence—on the one hand that is; on the other, they encourage the abject taking it in the chin, without defense or retaliation, as the height of some kind of nobility.

But there is another aspect of this "Absolute Truth" business, and this deals with the weather-vane sort of individual who has no tenacity whatever in adhering to any principle, even tentative ones. He is that sort of character who might rightly be called a sneak and a coward, upon whom one can place no trust whatever. He might be likened to a weather-vane, pointing in one direction one moment and in another the next moment, always instinctively concerned with his own skin, who while not exactly a lick-spittle or poltroon is nevertheless hardly distinguishable from "the lowest form of animal life". In other words, one who basically lives off his own kind. It is this form of degeneracy which is most commonly found among the human species. And

such is the corruption of language that the words traitor and treasonable are terms applicable, or at least are applied, to precisely the contrary types of persons. It is in fact the corruption of language which makes difficult if not impossible any sort of distinction whatever.

Now it is quite possible for a person who deplores the weather-vane, who has a distinct aversion to the person whom one never knows where he is at, who has a revulsion toward persons who lack any consistency but who are "here today and gone tomorrow", to say that he prefers some conception of "eternal truth", or "Absolute Truth". Relatively speaking, we know just what he means; and may sympathize with the discrepancies in language which make it so difficult for him to express his meaning. In a given circumstance he may be impelled to make a statement which, depending on the interpreter, seems to say the opposite to what he means. And if such an interpreter is of a shallow sort, who deals in clichés and pat phrases, it is obvious that we are in a troublesome situation. It is impossible to get a person to consider what he does not want to believe. In which instance intelligent conversation is impossible.

It is a fact that intelligent conversation is always impossible when those engaged in it have diverse interests and when *feelings* are aroused which militate against any mutually objective concern to get at facts. Both parties may fear what the fact may educe. Both may fear any "Objective Truth" even while each may claim to be monopolizers of same.

In a society wherein the economic mores constitute a built-in scramble for perquisites, either in the form of forceful exploitation or parasitism, we may find also a built-in conflict of interests in the milieu of which an honest search for truth becomes impossible. We find not only that the governmental

power structures are manned by professional liars, but that the whole of society becomes suffused with fear and deceit. And the experts of deception become the so-called intellectual element of the community. The situation arrives at a point of self-aggravating no return. Bigger and better lies become the order of the day. To speak of any kind of truth becomes a farce. In fact, to utter any bare and obvious truth becomes a form of heresy.

*August 8, 1966*

## **Introduction to Ragnar Redbeard's *Might Is Right***

Browsing through some old radical periodicals, I saw in an 1898 issue of *The Eagle and the Serpent* an advertisement of a book titled *Might Is Right*. In subsequent issues it was variously commented upon by Alfred Wallace, Bernard Shaw, Thomas Common (translator of Nietzsche into English), Benjamin Kidd, Benjamin R. Tucker, and a number of others. The journal was edited by John Basil Barnhill whose pseudonym was Erwin McCall. As a connoisseur of radical literature I became curious, but I didn't find a copy until years later.

About 1946, a friend in Detroit to whom I had lent a book told me that he had seen a sun-faded copy in a second-hand bookshop, priced 50¢, and when he purchased it the dealer went into the rear and brought out a new copy. The original issue was published in 1897, but this issue, printed with the

same plates, was dated 1927. Asked, the dealer said that he had five copies. A few days later I purchased these remaining copies, intending to present them to friends, with whom we had great chuckles over it.

I had asked the dealer where he got the books and was told that he bought them from an agent who came around once a month. I asked him to enquire if there were any more, and when his postcard was forwarded to Lane's End where I was visiting at the time, saying that there were two small cartons of them in a warehouse in Chicago, I wrote to another friend who had enjoyed the book, who thereupon went and dickered for them, which I think he got for 30 or 39¢ each.

This strange book is anti-Christ, anti-capitalist, anti-communist, anti-anarchist, anti-semitic-negro-oriental, and anti-just-about-everything-else except naked force. It was enjoyable to see such a great job of cudgeling, the blows one received being bearable as long as everyone else was getting it. The book is uncomfortably convincing in spots, and the author seems well read about the horrors committed by men upon men. Whether the book was written with tongue in cheek is rather dubious.

Reading the book again with the intent of writing my impression of it, I began to realize that if I gave any of the copies my friend had given me (on his visit to Suffern), I might be identified with some of the lunacies it contained, particularly its race prejudice. Few people, especially radicals, are able to read a book of this nature with objective humor, and it became a quandary what I might do with them. Radicals are almost invariably very serious people and touchy about their ideals. I know I am.

On page 316 of Ralph Chaplin's book *Wobbly* he mentions *Might Is Right* and claims that the wobblies had nothing to do with it, although its publication address, 4 Tooker Place, was the headquarters of

the wobblers at that time. Chaplin describes the author as a “diminutive, repressed Near North Side philosopher with delusions of grandeur”.

I think that the book is a good argument that in the final analysis it is power that decides human affairs—good, that is, if common sense and the empathy which may be educed from self-interest be left out of the reckoning. It seems to me that from the proposition that you can go your way, and I mine, even though we disagree vehemently on which way is better, we may learn from each other’s experience and perhaps discover that the philosophy of liberty and non-violence is a solid foundation for human relations. Otherwise, especially in the modern world, the alternative is mutual annihilation.

*August 27, 1966*

## **Much Ado About What?**

Notwithstanding all his preachments about love, and adherence to the good, the true, and the beautiful, man is a fertilizer-producing apparatus or organism, for if he isn’t that, he isn’t anything. The plain biological truth is that if he doesn’t keep a stream of assimilatable matter coursing through his guts, he will cease to be. And it takes only the slightest observation to note that to acquire this material he will do anything whatever—lie, cheat, enslave, exploit, rob, and murder, depending on circumstances. Dissimulation and deception have been constant factors all through known history—and we find life living on life all through the animal

and plant kingdom. The fundamental question around which all human action hovers is economy in the production and allocation of wealth—the acquirement of most benefit with the least amount of wear and tear and pain. And since all the means of life come from the earth, upon which man must live, the allocation of the earth's bounties is a prime consideration.

If one fraction of the earth's population claims to “own” an inordinate portion, to the deprivation and detriment of a large fraction, and charges this latter a price for living on the earth or for access to its bounties, there will certainly be exploitation, struggle, and strife, and inevitably war. And yet unlimited holdings of the earth's surface as property, and even the various means of holding humans in subjection as virtual property, has been in existence as far back in history as we know anything about.

The next absolute essential for life to endure is the need to cooperate to some degree. It is unfortunate, for it is in cooperative enterprise that the individual finds that he must relinquish some of his liberty and independence, to submit to some agreed-upon rules or plan of action, in order to coordinate the activities of those associated or organized, in order to effectively accomplish the purpose for which combined action was formed. It would be better if complete liberty and independence could be maintained, in that the law of consequences could perform its work of producing competent individuals. But since no individual possesses the strength, ability, time, opportunity, or know-how to produce all that is necessary to keep him alive, he finds it necessary to cooperate, at least for a modicum of time, at certain places, for certain purposes, in order that each of them, in view of the law of increasing returns, may acquire enough for his livelihood.

There are two methods of cooperation. One is by direct supervision under some sort of authority, be it an agreed-upon code, perhaps written, or via managers or bosses. The other method is by mutual aid or the exchange of products and services between independent or relatively independent individuals or groups. This latter method is known as reciprocity and in conformance with it we may observe the formation of division of labor, competition or the choice between different offerers of goods and services—this latter method purported to solve the social problem: who is to do what, when, where, why, and how, and what is each to receive for the efforts he has put forth. Under this latter phenomenon the concept of value, or equity in exchange, arises.

Almost from the dawn of known history, as men emerged from the awkward inconveniences of barter, men came to decide upon one commodity which would be universally accepted in exchange for goods, and thus, by means of money and later circulating credit was made possible an astounding expansion of cooperative endeavour. But even from the first, the controllers and monopolizers of this means of furthering cooperation found it possible to mulct the rest by means of exorbitant charges for their services, which charges were called interest or usury. Long before the christian era the iniquity of the exactions made by so-called money-lenders was realized, but because of the shortage of money material, gold, it was easily monopolized, and short in supply. It was not known how this monopoly of gold-holders could be avoided. And since the alleged lending of money was such a remunerative activity, a monopoly of issue of monetary instruments has been maintained, by force, ever since. This monopoly has always been in the hands of either of the State or ruling authorities,



or by private concerns upheld and maintained by the ruling authorities, by preventing anyone else to perform these services.

It has been predominately these legally-created monopolies—systems of land tenure which deprived some for the benefit of others, and the monopoly of money and credit issue—which have been the fundamental causes of all the chicanery, exploitation, lying, cheating, robbing, murder, eventuating in human slaughter on a large scale as in wars. And yet we find that even today, midst the turmoil and manufactured scramble, where it is the “in” thing for nearly everyone to be a sociologist, there is hardly an individual or group or persons who have even the faintest idea from whence their difficulties arise. For all practical purposes, there is hardly a person alive who has a clear idea of what are the essentials of a peaceful and orderly society. None can clear their minds from the delusion that the solution of the social problem depends upon other than getting some good guys into power, to establish some system, by force and violence, and the philosophy of liberty is almost entirely unknown, even though its shibboleths drool from the mouths of a thousand and one varieties of professional lackwits who make their livings from what are essentially attempts to maintain the status quo, as paid lackeys for the various corporate structures (whether capitalist or communist) which now hold what is almost absolute economic and political power in their hands.

In America these contending groups, which include the revolt on the campus, the civil-rights movement, the anti-war and pacifist groups, as well as so-called Conservatives, and political parties of various colour—are all fighting in a melee, getting their heads broken and their bodies shot, without understanding what the squabble is all about. Not one of this motley array of nation or world saviours

really knows what they are fighting for! I have not seen an iota of intelligible discussion about a solution of the land and money problems, which I began by showing to be the essential elements for the continuity of life itself.

*November 6 1966*

## Should I Try to Communicate?

I have long been gradually coming to the conclusion, first instinctively then consciously, that I would be better off, and those whom I might try to communicate with more satisfied, were I to completely sever relations with them. Since I happen to be a refractory individual, more prone to critically examine than to praise—that is to say, to be more disagreeable than agreeable—few people, if any, would exactly care to stomach me. I can furnish examples galore that this has been the case throughout my life. The role of a recalcitrant is indeed a lonely one; the only recognition or appreciation he is likely to receive comes years after his death, if at all.

If one be such as to be able to be used by others, even if such “usage” be mutual and reciprocal, it is relatively easy to “get along” in this world, to belong, and to be admired. But at any rate he must be useable, or he is expendable.

The force of these conclusions has gradually dawned upon me, through the years. Probably the occasion for my rejection is a reflection of my own rejection of society, of my own repressions, of

my fears to expose even the love for others which I have felt, fearing for my own inadequacy or fear of being ridiculous, leaving me as a person who is hardly capable of feeling like a participant in this world, and only an observer, unresponsive to love, even if luckily I am not prone to hate--leaving only a residue in me of wanting to know and to understand.

Persons whom I have tried to help, perhaps not so much for their sake but for the empathic pleasure I got for whatever I did; persons who have not done anything for me, nor probably would if they could, have responded by trying to get more from me--leaving me with the bitter taste of realizing that I could have the last drop of blood drained from me, without the least grounds for expectation that the drainer would do other than be annoyed at the sight of my desiccated corpse.

The occasion for these remarks, as already suggested, is the response I have received from my gratuitous offer of criticism. One recipient of a couple of bits of writing of mine responded with the somewhat non-committal remark that the pieces were "brilliant but shocking". Whether this meant that he was repelled, enlightened, or hoped for my speedy demise, I am not able to say. Whatever courtesy might be implied by enlightening me was not forthcoming. I felt that I had been unceremoniously dismissed as beneath even contempt.

Another late instance of a response to criticism that the world was a rotten place, was that the recipient wished he had the guts to commit suicide, and that he was indisposed to further conversation. My critical appraisal had suggested that the person wasn't thinking effectively, was prone to read and repeat what he had read, apparently without giving the statements of the source of his ideas sufficient

critical evaluation. I was deeply touched by his depression, for living as I have I am quite familiar with loneliness and dejection; but since my way of thinking does not coincide with those who entertain the idea of "guilt", I could not "blame" myself for his state of mind, but rather tried to understand the phenomenon. It would appear that the desire for approbation, the urge to tell rather than listen and perhaps learn, and the corresponding revulsion to being told that one is mistaken is just about universal and is directly indicative that the will-to-live is immediate and instinctive, rather than contemplative and geared to a longer-range view.

But the point is that in submitting criticism such as this, all I am accomplishing is arousing the ire, or pressing into despondency, the recipient, and becoming myself a depressing and dastardly person. It is not worth the candle. Perhaps the last on my list will be scratched off, and I shall crawl into my shell, despising even more the other two-legged creatures around me, and having less, even nil, estimation of my own use on this planet.

One might become popular and deemed wise and discerning, by showering praise and appreciation, even though feigned. But fortunately or unfortunately I have not as yet found it necessary to dissimulate with my peers in order to wend my way in this world; and I find it extremely distasteful to consciously do so. I deplore and excruciatingly suffer from my own lack of "manners"--no, not merely manners but the lack of that sort of tact which is kindly and inoffensively helpful. I am not fond of myself at all. But it seems to me that anyone who professes to deal in ideas should be hardier than to be irked or depressed by the clothes they appear in, or the agreeableness of the ideas themselves, or should get into some other field of endeavour. The truth or falsity of ideas does not depend on the

flowerly beauty of the language they are couched in, nor in the handsomeness or ugliness of the person who utters them.

*March 13 1965*

## **A Self-Compensating Society**

Suppose that in a society (economy) where shoes were being manufactured in a given way, some person should start producing better shoes in a cheaper way. He could soon get all the trade and put other shoemakers out of business. He probably would actually do this, if the other shoemakers were prevented from emulating his methods. The price he charged for shoes could be as high as the market would bear. He could become immensely rich, simply because he was protected in a situation where he could best the efforts of much labor of others for relatively less labor of his own.

But suppose that he were not protected, and that other shoemakers were free to emulate his methods. In the attempt to get their share of the lucrative trade they would lower prices, and this competitive process would continue, and if there were no privileges or handicaps whatever placed on production and trade, the prices of all products and services would bear a relation to the amount of arduousness necessary for their production. They couldn't go lower because no one would continue in business at a loss.

It is thus, in circumstances of freedom or anarchy, by virtue of competition and fluctuations in prices, that a tendency toward equilibrium and equity would always be operative, together with a

tendency to equate supply with demand. This is all there is in essence to a free economy. But there has never been a free economy anywhere, at any time, during recorded history.

Given liberty and competition, or freedom to produce and trade, there will result a mutable, changing, self-adjusting, and equitable economy—an economy which will neither inordinately stimulate technological and scientific development, nor hamper it—and we could observe a self-compensating system.

The moment that liberty is interfered with or denied, because of inequitable holdings of land as property, and restrictions placed upon trade by the erection of monopolies in the issue of money and credit, Pandora's Box will have been opened and a myriad of evils will emerge, each of which will be attempted to be cured on the periphery as if they were things-in-themselves or separate problems of living. This fatuous treating of effects will in turn create other evils, which will be attempted to be cured by more sumptuary laws, and we shall be confronted with a curative and piecemeal attack on mankind's ills by the constant manufacturing of laws and penalties—all of which will in its very nature be self-aggravating.

It is this latter piecemeal method of treating effects, and this latter method alone, which has been the basis of all attempts to ameliorate the conditions of man. It has created a myriad of specialized professions all allegedly devoted to man's well-being, like politicians, priests, doctors, educators, lawyers, economists, reformers, and so-called social workers and do-gooders of every description, and we must not omit psychologists, each making a living, like scavengers, on a decaying civilization. This civilization now has passed the point of no return, and will not be changed, simply because so many persons, if not everyone, have an economic interest

or stake in the very corruption which is heading mankind toward physical, moral, and intellectual degeneration, and indeed mutual suicide.

I have indicated the self-compensating effects of anarchy in what is usually called the economic field, but the same salubrious tendency would operate in all other fields of living, and the implications and repercussions which would occur in every aspect of human relations would be self-ameliorating. There is absolutely no substitute for liberty in the achievement of the greatest functioning and the highest aspirations which are possible for man.

As for interference with liberty, we do not find anyone of the self-styled exponents of "free enterprise," like Ludwig von Mises who does not studiously and carefully evade mentioning many of the basic evils to which I have referred. Of the hundreds of thousands of words these professional scribblers-for-pay have written, such men will not step on the toes of their employers. They know on what side their bread is buttered.

A certain Mr. Henry Hazlitt is for high interest rates because that presumably gives more money to the owners of capital so that they can furnish more capital and create more jobs; he is for high rents because this will presumably stimulate the building industry; he is for high profits because this will presumably invite capital into the country, and perhaps even protect the gold supply upon which supposedly the money and credit monopoly bases its operations. He presumably considers the income tax the root of all evil, especially progressive income tax, because this hits the rich harder, apparently not aware that were it not for the disgorging of some of the loot for the benefit of the victims of the very schemes which he proposes, which must of necessity be to the detriment of the very market demand or buying power upon which the whole economy

depends for the sale of the goods produced—that is to say he is too obtusely short-sighted to realize that were it not for the so-called welfare measures which he deplores the whole economy would go to pot. For this sort of bilge of half-truths he is considered a great economist.

On the other hand, we have naïve and relatively sincere men such as Ralph Borsodi, who is an effect treater. He has chopped up life and living into compartmentalized “problems,” each of which he believes he has solved by the establishment of “norms.” This is very kind and considerate of him to presume to solve other people’s problems—problems which they could solve perhaps much better for themselves, and incidentally get educated in the process, if they had the liberty to do so and were not hamstrung. What are Mr. Borsodi’s “norms” other than what his opinions are as to what constitutes the good life? And how is he going to inaugurate his prescribed system? By “right” education, by so-called “leaders” or “educators”—who will indoctrinate their pupils into his “norms.” He does not even know what education is, confusing it with indoctrination. He virtually presumes to set himself up, like utopians in general, as a know-it-all who is able to set misguided souls right on how to live, blissfully unaware that their sorry state has been caused by the forced denial of liberty, and that if they were free to learn from the natural law of consequences they might be able to live satisfactory lives.

The effect ameliorator and aspiring world fixer would establish ends or goals by making prescriptions for everything under the sun. They think about society in static terms, as if it was something that could be manufactured. This is the sort of imbecile that Karl Marx and his followers are. They are going to run everybody and everything



and God help the poor yokel who does not bow down to their mandates. They will shoot them down by the millions.

Opposed to this are the libertarians, if indeed there are any, who do not presume to tell anybody how to live, provided they will allow the next fellow to also live his life as he sees fit. The genuine libertarian is not bent on establishing ends or prescribing laws, but has been searching for a method of societal life which is dynamic, which allows variety, change, mutability, and realizes that real education is a matter of trial and error and experience and requires, as a genuinely scientific organization requires, complete Liberty and Anarchy, as opposed to the static hamstringing and imposition of coercion and violence by the State.

The plainly observable fact is that lack-wits and degenerates are all over the place, and like the unsuccessful search of Diogenes, there is not a single sane person to be found on this benighted earth. And the very fact that all these sadly putrefying and unfortunate characters not only do not realize their own degeneracy, but actually deem it a sort of superiority, points to the hopelessness of expecting other than the eventual extinction of men. Perhaps this event is not far off.

## Political Considerations

Political refers to policy, way, method, a schema or relations, etc. Since it refers to man's actions, all actions that are social in nature, that is, which involve two or more persons, are included in the term "political."

But the same actions are also included in the concepts biological, economic, ethical and moral, etc., etc. The conclusion is that all these alleged categories are nothing other than facets of the same thing—or in more general terms, are manifestations of the incomprehensible phenomenon, impulse, urge or motivating force called the will-to-live.

The categorization of these different terms or aspects, in an Aristotelian manner, proves to be a complete misapprehension of what gives in this world. They do not exist as separate and separable entities or things-in-themselves; and those who treat them in this manner only prove themselves to be disintegrated persons whose consciousness exist in a compartmentalized and disassociated manner—such as one might expect in an infant who sees life to be composed of a bewildering array of separate instances unconnected with each other. More or less, this is the way practically everyone who has thought about “the human condition” has considered the matter.

For instance, a self-styled psychologist usually knows little or nothing about “economics”, or “biology”, or the origin and nature of human institutions in general. Neither does a person or “professor” engaged in teaching “politics” or “ethics”, or to be even more disassociated, “business administration.” The result of all these categorizations and “professorships” has been expressed in the phrase “men who know more and more about less and less”—a fragmentation and a non-system of general ignorance resulting in masses of ridiculous ignoramuses—the persons who pose as “teachers” and “professors” in the various “educational” institutions throughout the world, each of which are indoctrinating flunky apparati which exist for the simple purpose of maintaining the exploiting coercive apparati called governments,

throughout the world.

At no time in so-called recorded history did there not exist predatory murdering and enslaving apparati, called governments or the State, as institutionalized organizations originated and perpetuated for the simple purpose of plunder. The categorical disassociation of which I have spoken is specifically devoted to a *modus operandi* for conducting these establishments according to the rule of “divide and conquer”. As a general rule, cosmologists, ontologists, metaphysicians, philosophers, theologians, politicians, economists, historians, physicians, scientists, etc., etc., etc. are mere flunkies and prostitutes, conditioned products and victims of the social mores in which they live—pimps in the service of respective status quos—and to consider any of these pathetic characters *thinkers* or other than apologists of the circumstances of the age in which they live is simply ridiculous. In the very nature of things, motivated by the urge to remain alive, they are necessarily victims of what may be called Pavlovian treatment.

There is probably not a so-called known person in all history who is considered a “great thinker”—that is, not one in ten thousand of them—who is other than I have described, and if and whenever a variant or sport should have existed, he has done so as an eremite or hermit whose works, if he happened to be a person who did any scribbling, were not found until long after his death. Nearly all the variants, if they exposed themselves during their lifetimes, were put to death, either by the authorities or their stupid victims.

March 28, 1968

## Scribblings

Although I am old, a recluse, “way out” in my convictions, off the beaten path, and probably haven’t much longer to go, my observations on the scene around me and all over the world are certainly such as to promote paranoia. Some of my thoughts have been published, but they no doubt have been considered by those who read them to be so improbable and absurd as not to be taken seriously. But I feel certain that in a number of places on this globe the mere expression of them would be exceedingly dangerous.

It is rather trepidatious for me to observe that those who have been instrumental in having some of my ideas published have been careful to absolve themselves from being considered responsible for holding the same ideas. But if they can become heroes by proxy, so to speak, they are quite willing to be on hand if by chance some credit or credibility be in the offing. After all, everybody and his brother is a sociologist these days, and the lowliest recipient of governmental dole can rattle off criticism and complaint with the best of them. Anyone who would in the least suggest that this is the best of all possible worlds would be laughed to scorn and considered detestable. Indeed, the number is growing who believe that it is only a matter of time and occasion before **Gotterdamering** is upon us.

Since we all have to die sometime, I really don’t see why the prospect should be too disturbing, especially since it is quite natural for each and every human being to think of himself first as far as survival on this earth is concerned. The span which each human’s frame of reference circumscribes can hardly be more than a lifetime, although those with children or friends of younger age might exhibit broader concerns. But aside from

this, each one's concern is for the present, and for a duration hardly longer than his expected lifespan. That is why all humans are quite content to commit any skullduggery as soon as by doing so their own existence is prolonged. I have phrased this phenomenon as a general scavenging situation wherein each person is subsisting like a vulture upon the decomposing remains of a putrefying society. The reader of these lines will of course absolve himself from this general categorization, self-righteously proclaiming to his satisfaction that he is not like other men. Those who are not competent to kid themselves can hardly kid others. Perhaps life itself, or mere existence, is a delusionary process.

But I'm not aware of any of the so-called great thinkers who ever even considered this point of view. Every ontologist, metaphysician, theologian and philosopher I ever heard of felt secure that there was a purpose to the whole phenomenon, and indeed, that *he* knew what the purpose was. I'll be goddamned if I know of any of these wiseacres who were convincing to me. Every single one of them had an axe to grind—generally in the direction of aspiring to a society in which they (individually) hoped or expected to be secure. Every one of their imagined utopias and heavens were to be havens congenial to their own ridiculous and putrid selves. Meanwhile each of them were busily engaged in filling their pockets from the boobs whom they could get to accept their own particular brand of bullshit.

I have shown elsewhere that politicians, pulpit pounders, physicians, psychologists, lawyers, advertising agents, the military, plutocrats, bankers, and that vast horde of violence-oriented camorra that may be called the “law and order” brigade—all these pathetically vicious bastards depend on crap and corruption as their *raison d'être* and the means

by which they fill their guts. It should be quite obvious that through the more turmoil and viciousness that exists in this world, the better off economically these professional anti-life creatures will be. Any goddamn fool who expects to find solace or emancipation from this vast and increasing swarm of degenerates has much to learn indeed. As far as the moronic and imbecilic can go in the way of grasping what it's all about is to latch on to the "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" theory, i.e., become a super-patriot, a huzzarer to non-existent gods, and go out to slaughter peasants throughout the world, especially if they don't consent to be the conquered slaves of your masters. "Fuck you all", I say, as I try to keep out of your sight.

*March 18, 1968*

## **More Scribblings**

My sort of scribbling being unacceptable even to "radical" journals, I bought a duplicating machine in order to make a few copies of stuff to send to friends, then becoming surprisingly aware of how few of even my friends knew what I was talking about. Further, even among self-styled "libertarian" periodicals, including "anarchist", I either ran up against a blank wall, part of which I considered abysmal ignorance and prejudice, or detected fear and the propensity to wash their hands of me, or throw me to the wolves if necessary. Fuck them; fuck everybody!—including whoever is reading these lines. I scribble now, if I scribble at all, for my own satisfaction—squibs and starts, much of it sophomoric, probably destined for the incinerator.

To my mind it doesn't make a particle of difference. The forces operating today, mostly unrecognized and completely not understood, either in origin or effect, are so entrenched and accentuated that there is no question whatever that humankind has passed the point of no return, short of some kind of miracle. I see now, what it is almost inherently impossible for humans to realize: that the "course of events" was determined from the beginning and that man is necessarily inept as an observing and thinking apparatus. In fact there is much evidence that man has thought himself into the very meat-chopping predicament in which he finds himself, which he might not have done if he hadn't inadvertently begun to monkey with his own behaviour, so to speak, or having some monkey with the behaviour of others. I cannot say that I despise the human race, including myself, as much as pity it—an attitude the kindly aspect of which I gratefully attribute to Schopenhauer.

### Scribbling (3)

It is a matter of deep concern to me that very little of the stuff I scribble is encouraging. Judging by the difference between what I think **is**, and what should or might be, the disparity, and what is of more importance, the prevailing *tendencies* throughout the world, the outlook to me seems bleak indeed. Getting worse, I mean. And even if there were any appreciable amount of intelligence observable, there is no assurance whatever that it is accompanied by sufficient *will* to make it effective—in a chaotic situation it is more likely that individuals will use their intelligence to take care of their individual

skins, even though it means cooperating with this degenerating and putrescent society. Indeed, this quite natural impulse might be said to be what the *general* malaise consists of. Just as it is almost wholly true that what goes into one man's stomach does not nourish another man, so also is other people's death of minor concern as contrasted with one's own well-being. A few thousand people being killed in Viet Nam, for instance, may be of much less concern to the readers of these lines than the price of pickles in the supermarket. One needs only to bring up various topics in conversation to find out what interests different people, like some sort of catastrophe to whole villages or towns in various parts of the world, contrasted with say, whether one or the other of two basketball teams won last night. Persons who deal with humans in bunches and swarms know well the "bread and circuses" technique. People in crowds act in manners that to many of them individually would be considered vile crimes.

The American soldier in Viet Nam, for instance, really hasn't the faintest idea of why he's there; perhaps he accepts the reason given him without question. At any rate he does what others are doing.—Which suggests that the "course of events" or "historical development" is about a blind and nonsensical affair, with each of the continuing line of participants thinking only of the moment. The crowning obscenity is that man is the master of his fate, and that his predicament is the result of his own culpability.

*March 29, 1968*

**To the Victims of So-Called**



## Educational Systems

I submit that few of you ever had an original idea in your lives. You do not do any thinking, simply because creative ideation is not encouraged in the schools that you enter. In fact it is discouraged. I am speaking specifically about areas where your social relations are concerned. The upholders of the status quo, everyone and always, will hardly permit the indulgence of heretical thoughts and opinions. In the churches, to do so is to risk incurring the wrath of theologians, and indeed the relegation to Hades, often after the infliction of severe tortures. The history of the Catholic Church is replete with such coercion and violence.

It is not thinking merely to have opinions. Nor is it thinking even to have accumulated a selection from the opinions of others. The *sine qua non* of intelligence is the ability to **ask significant questions**. And it is the essence of mental capacity to be able to realize the factors involved in the solution of any problem, and to juxtapose the various influences involved in order merely to pose a theory. Then this theory needs to be subjected to rigorous inspection and critical evaluation. Etc. Etc. Etc.

The very condition of the world proves that original thinking has been placed at a discount, in favour of conformance. The basic reason is because education, so-called, has been in the hands of Church and State, institutions which by their very name and nature are determined to maintain the status quo and resist change. The head of the “educational” institution in Berkley, California is said to have stated specifically that the university was a conditioning factory intended to acclimate its students to obediently obey their masters and conform to the mores and taboos of the existing society. That this anti-educator should be the head

of one of our largest universities certainly is a significant fact of modern society. The whole world is being ruled and coerced by fools and criminals.

There is not much point in directing one's attention to this or that place of folly and poltroonery = the whole civilization from top to bottom is one gigantic conglomeration of imbecility.

## On the Rejuvenation and Perpetuation of the Human Race

One may hesitatingly speculate on just what kind of miracle would eliminate that vast proportion of the human race which has already become so corrupted that no hope whatever for sane living seems possible. Such elimination would have to include practically all persons over twenty years of age, and a great many who are younger. It would include practically all the people in the northern hemisphere.

I'm afraid it would have to also include at least 90% of the people of the southern hemisphere. Perhaps it would need to include everyone on earth except a few isolated peoples say within Africa and South America, and a few inhabitants on islands that have not been contaminated by so-called civilization as it has been known during recorded history, and in any regime.

There is positively no hope for the regeneration of peoples who cannot even imagine their own degeneration and degradation, much less understand it or have the will to do anything about it.

I have started out by saying that persons under

twenty might be excluded from the Armageddon. On second thought, I realize the absurdity of this. These younger ones, in the United States and elsewhere, who have been brought up by their elders in milieu's saturated with the imbecilities which are integral parts of regimes where force and violence have been the *modus operandi* for controlling and regulating human affairs, and who may be presumed to have been indoctrinated in the prevailing mores of such civilizations, can hardly be expected not to prolong them in their future struggles in facing the materials and forces of nature, in their relations with each other. It is practically inconceivable that they could emancipate themselves. And as for the very young, except in localities where the acquirement of food is easy and the supply plentiful, they would not have the energy and know-how necessary for their survival.

Here I might hastily say that those who may at this point accuse me of pessimism and an anti-life bias, that they thereby would show their ignorance and real degeneration in understanding; for my prognosis points completely in the other direction. Otherwise I would suggest the complete annihilation of the human race as the only way of solving the problem of the elimination of crime. I define crime as anti-life behaviour according to its denial and suppression of liberty. I am optimistic in that I believe that the present schemes of things are not the necessary and inevitable condition of man. In saying which I impute neither "goodness" nor "badness" to the animal known as *homo sapiens*. I attribute his present condition of physical, mental, and moral putrefaction to the blunder of our ancient ancestors in institutionalizing and perpetuating, as habits, practices which arose in a circumstance of scramble, in which scramble and the conflicts involving robbery and murder, under the then circumstances

preservative of the continuity of life, are obviously not preservative under modern possibilities. I am not much perturbed by imputations of imbeciles that I am other than optimistic, although I say in candour that this optimism does not include the prolonged existence of the readers of these lines, or the writer of them.

Some years ago, in a few writings of mine, I gave reasons for believing why the “course of human events” could hardly be looked upon as other than a process—one thing follows from another. I also gave my reasons for believing that humans have been victims of that process, and not the controller of it. Also that the obvious tendency of that process was the utter extinction of life on this planet, by virtue of what the humans would do in the use of atomic fission and also chemical and biological warfare. In the face of this prospect, I have observed absolutely nothing to dispute this prediction in the discussions and disputes in the various means of communication, that in my judgement were performed by pathetic imbecile marionettes who fatuously presumed to consider themselves other than the conditioned criminals and idiots which they actually are. I have noted no sense whatever, an occurrence which does not seem to me to have evoked much acumen.

If it had so happened that some portions of the earth, inhabited but not “discovered” by the predators who engaged in that business, had remained outside and uninfluenced by the general progressive trend toward the complete degeneration of human motivations and aims, then that part or those portions might be considered hopeful human oases for man’s reincarnation toward what is now more and more facetiously called “human”. But the criminals of this earth (in the so categorizing of which I do not imply “guilt”), or perhaps more accurately, it may be said that *criminality*, has spread its virus

practically everywhere. Incidentally, the professed anti-crime people, the pious and righteous, have, by a quirk or paradox, become the most definitely criminal. This is a fact the statement of which would undoubtedly be an invitation for elimination by these people, were they to be identified more specifically.

One might come to the startling conclusion that perhaps the use of the atomic bomb might be a blessing in disguise. What other way, I ask, can the developing trend toward even greater degeneration, and the very holocaust which is its undeniable denouement, be averted?

(Maybe I'm getting old and ga-ga; but when I wind the think box up, this is what comes out. Straining my guts to be an optimist!!)

## One Way of Getting Something Done

Our ancient ancestors found that one way of getting something was by the use of violence. If one's neighbour had a morsel, and one didn't, one could take it from him by force. As long as this way was used only between individuals, it was a pretty precarious operation. One way to make the process more effective was in the use of cooperation, by unification and the use of collective force, and by the use of dissimulation, deceit, surprise, and through compromise and negotiation in instances where the mutual use of violence might be detrimental to both sides, and finally by establishing organized extortion, by indoctrination, as a way of life.

Now with the use of collective force and division of labour, in the game of grab, it is not necessary for all of those engaged in such an operation to know or understand what they were fighting for. Indeed, in many cases, it would be a decided disadvantage for them to so understand. For they might come to the conclusion that no matter which side “won”, they would come out of the small end of the horn. It would be better if they could be made to believe that they were fighting for some great and noble cause—like fighting for God, for the Fatherland, for the holy cause of Liberty and Democracy or some other imagined system === anything that could induce obedience and sacrifice. It is thus that the perennial power elites throughout the ages have been able to maintain their supremacy. And God help those among the “nationals” who did not follow the party line, as laid down by their superiors, and do their duty as good, **little**, patriotic citizens.

It is thus that the master-slave relationship has been maintained through the ages.

The economic exploitation accompanying this modus operandi of maintaining “law and order” has been effected by the monopolization of portions of the earth, and making non-owners pay “owners” for the privilege of living on the earth. At the present time probably 90% of the most valuable portions of the earth are “owned” by 2% or less of the population.

And the second, and no doubt most important, means of robbing the general public is by monopolizing the facilities by which substantially all human cooperation may be carried on, namely that of granting use of mediums of exchange, such as money and credit. No one, in the United States for instance, can use his credit as an earnest for the acquisition of goods, without paying, directly or indirectly, the Federal Reserve System for such

opportunity. Even the federal government itself (as well as states and municipalities) is at the mercy of this exploiting monstrosity. This is an ungrateful situation inasmuch as it is the violent power of the federal government which upholds and maintains the Federal Reserve octopus.

The beneficiaries of this state of affairs somehow seem to be able to fog this whole matter all up, in such a way that very, very few people (especially the victims) have more than the faintest idea of how this mulcting phenomenon works or how they happen to be the goats. They will never know, for instance, as long as they are “educated” in “economics” in our “educational” institutions.

The personnel of government itself are “bought” and otherwise influenced by the beneficiaries of the “System”. The subsidized promoters of “free enterprise” such as private “freedom schools” and “foundations for economic education” are all prostitutes making their livings by hoodwinking the public. And the same goes for substantially all the public means of communication, such as newspapers, radio, television, etc.

The stranglehold which the beneficiaries of the land and money monopolies maintain in various populaces everywhere is so strongly entrenched that there seems no way in which it can be broken.

Peace groups, the civil rights movement, reformers and do-gooders of all varieties, including socialists and communists, do not seem to have the faintest idea of the connection between these monopolies and the goals which they aspire to. As a matter of fact, socialists and communists actually wish to make the monopolies complete, in the hands of the State—fatuously believing that organized government is some sort of mundane manifestation of the will of God, and which supposedly is

solicitously concerned with “the common weal”. We have of late seen “Conservatives” who are bent and eager to use violence to maintain the status quo, in America and elsewhere, for there are without a doubt “Conservatives” in communist and fascist countries, that is to say people who happen to have arrived in positions of power and affluence, by whatever means may have been established in various “nations”, to come to their “stations in life”. But all human exploitation aside from taxation rests in the final analysis on the monopolies of land and money--these being the primary means by which humans find an opportunity to earn their living.

The astonishing fact is that nowhere may be found any group of people who presume to offer a “solution” to the predicament in which the peoples of the world now find themselves, who have any clear idea at all of what it is that fundamentally bedevils the world. Whether it be “free enterprisers”, fascists, communists, or what not—every mother’s son of them want to resort to organized violence as a means of solving the problems. Nearly all of them are too stupid to realize that the advent of such means of murder and destruction as is contained in the atomic bomb makes the use of violence utterly imbecilic as a modus operandi of achieving anything other than the annihilation of the human race. People everywhere, almost without exception, are so goddam stupid that they cannot be made to see that the real evil which confronts them is the very existence of the Governments which respectively rule over them. They continue, like fools embracing an iron maiden, to put their faith in attempts to get the “good guys” into power, so that the “bad guys” may be put in their places. It is enough to make an intelligent person, *if there be such*, believe that he is living in a community of raving maniacs.



*January 21 1969*

## **The World As We Know It, or Rather, Shall Not Know It**

The view expressed here of the basic nature of what may be called “the human phenomenon” is in almost complete variance with that held by anyone who has existed, at least in the western world. In brief, it is that the play has already been written and that men are merely acting out roles that have been inadvertently allotted to them. While the cast is composed of villains, fools, and victims, or whatever, none are “guilty” in the theological sense of this term, no more than are actors in any theatrical performance; all are victims of a historical process the precise nature of which I shall not go into here.

According to this view of the “course of events”, and if the experts on computers are correct, if it would be possible for a group of information gatherers to feed into a machine sufficient pertinent data, and what is to happen, in say, the next quarter century could be predicted with a fair degree of probability. The accuracy of the prediction, however, would depend upon the refraining by those receiving this prediction from using what knowledge they so obtained; like acting differently from how they would have if they did not have the prediction. Admittedly, this is a snag. But a greater snag inheres in the phrase “sufficient

pertinent data”.

However, if it were wanted to manipulate human beings in one way or another, it may be possible to do so on a very large scale, without those being conditioned having any awareness that they were being manipulated. Contemplating the possibilities raises all sorts of speculations on what could happen.

The conditioning of humans is precisely what is happening, and what has always happened. Humans are affected by the beliefs and establishments which they and their ancestors have inadvertently institutionalized; and the nature of this effect is completely oblivious to them. They believe they are “free”, but it is actually a delusion—they are merely reflex organisms, the puppets of the very course of events which they believe they are creating from choice, unaware that they are operating elements in a continuum.<sup>1</sup>

This circumstance should be obvious today, where with existing knowledge about the conditioning of humans, a great deal of influence can and is being exerted, albeit apparently unconsciously, as a sort of built-in feature of what is called a “way of life” or a culture. The infant and youth, for instance, is indoctrinated into the idiocies of their parents and teachers, up to the college level where rabbit-minded Professors in sociology classes manage to turn out near imbeciles. Read, listen, and “learn”—and repeat; this is the almost universal conception of what education consists of—and the ability to think becomes atrophied. That this is so, and that through television, radio, newspapers and periodicals the public is being bombarded with “news.” “discussions.” and what not that is intended to buttress the going Establishment, wherever one may be, is understood by anyone three degrees above morosity.

There are electric devices being used in school systems, by which students can be conditioned and acclimated so that they may continue to behave in a manner that will perpetuate and actually exacerbate the very insane relationships which they happen to be born into and live by. Devices exist which can overhear conversations distances away; which can see what is happening almost anywhere on earth; and which can in general spy almost without limit on practically anybody. Chemical, physical and psychological means of tampering with human beings by self-styled experts exist, and other means of brainwashing are being further developed. According to reports, it is possible to construct silent, lethal, death-ray guns with laser beams, which guns could be aimed, and triggered from remote places, making difficult if not impossible the detection of murderers. Such beams are said to be effective and lethal at distances up to 200 yards, maybe further. Assassination could become the stock-in-trade of secret aspiring power groups; and these groups might be unidentifiable. Large masses of people could be coerced and ruled by unknown persons, even more than today, and fear and terror become the order of the day. No place on earth could be used as a refuge. As for humans being capable of such diabolical behavior, we have but to observe how some men are acting today to realize that there are positively no lengths to which some men would not go, in order to achieve their objectives. It is a foregone conclusion that these devices will be used by whatever power elite that happens to exist in any "nation". It is common knowledge that a few men can let loose atomic bombs at targets almost anywhere on earth and wipe out whole populations or nations without those so annihilated having any idea of what hit them.

What is not so commonly realized, however, by

the general populations of “nations”, is the master-slave relationship which exists between the power elites called governments, and themselves. They haven’t the faintest suspicion or idea that these political cliques or mobs might be their real enemies just as much as the other gangs that happen to be ruling in other bailiwicks. Wherever they may live, they are taught, and in general believe, quite otherwise.

Meanwhile the respective criminal masters throughout the world go on playing the old game of conducting human affairs on the basis of violence, both internally and externally. Few if any “civilizations” known to history did not have monopolized violence as a *modus operandi* for conducting human relations, for maintaining the master-slave relationship, and as a final resort or way of getting things done. Many of these civilizations have disappeared through internal dry-rot and wars. But the *modus operandi* persists, operating through an extorting procedure which is euphemistically called, not robbery but Taxation.

Aside from the inherent corruption of the procedure, scientists, politicians, and the military are duly, conscientiously (even if cowardly) doing their duties as prescribed for them, along with their respective dupes and populaces, preparing for the mutual slaughter among “nations”, with the priesthood not merely condoning but sanctioning the whole procedure, giving their blessings and calling upon their respective Gods to help them in the slaughter—everyone stupidly and cowardly following precedent and tradition. The whole procedure is given the aspect of patriotism, glamour, nobility and righteousness, and in conformance to some authority, like the will of God, by all participants in the coming holocaust. Brave indeed, almost foolhardy, is the individual who protests

against the insanity, for the whole mob will set upon him and destroy him. Priests, politicians, plutocrats, and generals usually die in bed, however.

Between the past and today, however, there is a difference. This variation is nominally a quantitative one. And it is that instead of using spears and bows and arrows for maintaining supremacy, power elites have the atomic bomb which is devastating in its effects.

One may parenthetically observe that were it not for the existence of those monopolies of violence which we call the State, the existence of an atomic bomb would be virtually impossible. It would have been impossible because no unconstrained man would voluntarily invest in such an instrument of devastation while more profitable avenues of investment were open to him. The vast amount of capital needed to research and manufacture the bomb could only be amassed through extortion; and probably only with the millions upon millions of humans from whom the mulcting was done knowing absolutely nothing about what their money was being used for. So the respective power elites continue to make their moves in the same old-fashioned way, with mutual threat and what is called “the balance of terror” theory. And millions upon millions of people all over the world look on in entranced idiocy, themselves still favoring one or another of these criminal elites, that is, whatever mob or gang that is happening to rule over them.

But again it is of utmost importance to note that rulers and ruled alike have been indoctrinated into the relationship as a hand-me-down or cultural inheritance from ages past, and are both victims of what I call causal continuity or the logic of “the course of events”. There is intrinsically no such thing as good guys and bad guys, as our inveterate moralists incessantly tell us. At best, there are only

persons who suffer from their mistakes, and learn thereby,—but most importantly we are all victims of precedent, of a Process the salient characteristic of which is the institutionalizing of our mistakes and insanities as permanencies, which are self-aggregative and cumulative of diverse evils, thereby inflicting our errors on the unborn who in turn in their distorted and corrupted way accentuate the evils, creating new ones for their descendants.

Just reflect. No one who ever lived asked to be born. He had no say about whom his parents were to be. He could make no decision about the combination of genes and chromosomes he was to be endowed with. He had nothing whatever to say about what time, place, or circumstance he was to make his appearance. He did not even have a choice whether he was to be a fish, fowl, or mammal (or even a tree for that matter). He is thrust into a world saturated with the institutionalized imbecilities of his ancestors, and I suppose expected to make the best of it—to be obedient, moral, and patriotic, and all the rest of it. But all he can do is to swim with the current, if only as a means of survival. To call this bit of protoplasm “the master of his fate”, or affront him accusingly as being “culpable”, is just about as stupid a piece of irony I can imagine, and viciously unfair at that. He is little more than a feather being wafted by the breeze. And multiplying these feathers by no matter how many million doesn’t alter the basic determinism which underlies the whole phenomenon which we call the course of history.

No one now living had any say about the stupid Establishment under which he finds himself, wherever he may be—neither the fools, thieves, nor villains are other than victims of a Process. The institutionalization and the organization of such as Church and State and other corporate enterprises had a reason originally intended to be life-

preservative, but having a dynamic all their own, corruptingly metamorphosed into Juggernauts destined to destroy the individuals who compose them. Men believe that they are running institutions, but it is the institutions that are running the men. Perhaps it is man's propensity to think, or rather calling his rationalizing thinking, which was the Pandora's Box. Perhaps he would have been better off acting instinctively, on the basis of expedience, as apparently do animals. On such matters we can only speculate. Yet it is obvious that man is a victim of habit; considered as a labor-saving device, it precludes thinking, especially critical examination.

During the last century it was the common belief that meliorism was the ingredient of history—that the direction of social evolution was toward human liberty and the ultimate triumph of good over vicious fanaticism. But the events since the turn of the century have tended to cast this theory into the discard as being the mere effulgence of hope and optimism. The enslavement of nearly everyone on earth to the idiocies of organized religion, to the dynamics of organized power as exemplified by governments, and to the predatory interests of financial and industrial monopolies, and to whole systems of imbecilic congeries of derivative and related criminalities threatens the very existence of organic life.

And so, since the victims of a Process are themselves part of it, and are being manufactured so to speak into being perpetrators of it; and since the Process itself is one of deterioration and degeneration; there is little reason to believe that it can be halted from proceeding on to its inevitable conclusion in the annihilation of the human race. In fact there is more reason for believing that it will reach this denouement. In the figurative words of Benjamin Tucker, "The monster Mechanism is devouring

mankind.”

Philosophically speaking, there is no reason whatever for not believing that humans have been conditioned, if not more or less robots, or reflex organisms like the amoeba, since the beginning of life. Most religions tacitly acknowledge this, by supposing a supernatural God who is assumed to have made everything, who knows everything, who is all powerful. Without going into the origins of anthropomorphism, it is obvious that such a Being is responsible for and manipulates everything—including what man calls evil in this world. Man calls disasters “acts of God”.

Now if God knows everything, then he knows the future. If he knows the future, then the future is preordained. If the future is preordained, then man has no free will. If he has no free will, then the theory of the culpability of man is a vicious fiction.

But man’s culpability is necessary to prove man’s “guilt”. If man is guilty, then he is responsible and does evil gratuitously. If he is responsible, then he is a fit subject for torture and punishment, and threatened with hell-fire. One must obey the mandates of the confidantes of God, which happen to be to pay their tithes, to buy indulgences, and to otherwise induce God to favor them—for a price.

So, instead of following the obvious logic of their own position, the clergy had to invent “mystery”, in order to maintain their power and to mulct the gullible. The existence of nonsense must be verified on the ground of “mystery”—the absurd and inconceivable makes sense. It is thus that the first and greatest con game of all time, organized religion as a means of living off the fat of the land, is maintained. The criminals are the blest, nonsense is sense, up is down, and the language of double-talk corrupts all human relations.

If evil exists, God is obviously its maker. Aside



from crass ignorance, pretending to have intercessory powers with the almighty (as if God didn't know his own mind), may dupe great numbers of people to relinquish portions of their wealth, for surcease from their pains, for help in knocking hell out of their enemies, and for tickets to heaven— but can hardly be understood except as a great con game, perhaps the first and original con game. Priests and pulpit pounders have converted primitive man's guesses about the origin and meaning of the universe into a gimmick to fleece the gullible.<sup>2</sup>

We do not need to pause at the intellectual antics of the theologians who claim not to understand this, or deny it. If they haven't the wit to see what is self-evident, or deny it and still claim to comprehend the incomprehensible, actually inconceivable, they have no claim to the attention of intelligent men, only boobs—the unfortunate souls whom they have indoctrinated into what's what, while in their childhood. It is this sort of indoctrinated imposition inflicted upon children the world over which would impel a man from Mars to say that the planet Earth is populated with a squirming mass of creatures called Gullibles, who gather in swarms to kiss the hand or whatever of someone who has the effrontery to call himself their “leader.”

The mundane counterpart of the theological game of mulct is the institutionalization of robbery and murder by what is called the State. And when to arouse the hopes and fears of innocents, hogwash is buttressed by violence and coercion, as with the union of Church and State, we have a combination which is unbeatable—an anti-life collusion which, considered as statics in a Process, is inexorably destined to result in the annihilation of man and perhaps of all life on this planet. For with such a combination it is possible to organize masses of gullibles into shooting the asses off each other “for

God and Fatherland". All known history proves it. But no mere words or verbalizations can impart understanding, especially the understanding of the inextricability from what may be conceived as a built-in phenomenon of prevailing human relationships. But I am not here going to mull over the reasons, or rationale, of the origin of it all. Not here, except to repeat that most human mores had considerable sense at the time of their inception. But it does not always make sense to do something just because grandfather did it. And some things are not worth Conserving.

Depending on one's sense of pro-life values, one might estimate that more than 50 percent of the activities of humans is of an anti-life character and engagement in it may be considered worse than unemployed. For instance, under prevailing circumstances, if one of our major auto-manufacturing companies made a car that would last ten years, it would be out of business in half that time. Built-in shoddiness and deleteriousness in goods is a necessity in order to keep the wheels of industry going, to maintain the blood-sucking proclivities of financial institutions, to manufacture more culls so that the medical profession may clamor for more money for "research, and to rationalize the activities of "the military-industrial complex" and its determination to police the world no matter what the cost in lives and wealth. Is it any wonder that the victims of the insanity should turn to the infantile doctrine of communism as a promise of surcease from their agonies? And is it a wonder that the proponents of communism should establish semi-military regimes, knowing well that Conservatives are determined to wipe communism from the face of the earth in the effort to maintain their privileges? What chance has individual liberty to emerge from this insane confrontation?

Beware of him who offers you prescriptions on how to live your life, who is bent upon inflicting commandments, constitutions, laws, and restrictions upon your liberty. Remember that it is your life that you have to live, and that you are entitled to make your own mistakes and learn, and that you might do well to not allow yourself to be imposed upon by meddlers and tyrants. There is no substitute for Liberty as a means and end of the good life.

There are more fakers who speak in the name of liberty than you can shake a stick at. Remember that the Constitution of the United States did not prevent the father of his country from being a large slave-holder and landlord; nor did it prevent the system of land tenure which makes possible for the country to be “owned” by a fraction of its people, nor did it prevent the establishment of a financial monopoly which not only has the populace but the government itself at its mercy. Those who speak of the Constitution as if it was promulgated by the Almighty, and States Rights as if it precluded the rights of individuals, are little other than enemies of the country and of mankind.

While the reader is pondering over the foregoing cogitations, may I present him with one of the greatest paradoxes. When a difficulty or evil is encountered, there naturally arises someone who will minimize or try to minimize the toil and pain. So far, so good. When a profession is made of his services, that is a paying profession. IN A CIRCUMSTANCE OF MANUFACTURED SCARCITY AND LACK OF OPPORTUNITY, we have something going for us. And we shall find that all those whose professions are aimed at doing us good are actually doing us, anything but good. The self-styled confidante of God, the politician, the physician, the psychiatrist, the lawyer, the educator, the social worker, the military and police and other paraphernalia constituting the “law

and order” brigade—all those who allegedly make their living taking care of our aches and pains and troubles—have actually an entrenched interest in the existence of the very evils they presume to treat. This is a phenomenon which as far as I know no one has ever clearly seen or understood. But it is perhaps the salient characteristic of what in the larger sense may be called the Tragedy of Man. Without prompting, I leave the reader a conundrum or contradiction the resolving of which involves some of the profoundest of social discoveries.

Meanwhile, I state the problem. IN ORDER TO DO GOOD IN THIS WORLD, BY OVERCOMING EVIL, IT IS NECESSARY FOR EVIL TO EXIST. This is self evident. The logic is that the more evil that exists, the more “good” can be done. And we may conclude that the doers-of-good, who make their living thereby, are by a quirk of fate the perpetuators and perhaps even the promoters of evil! Do you think I am playing with words? If you do, I say to you that you are so brainwashed and stupid that you cannot see what is before your eyes.

1. Every individual is hog-tied and brainwashed and circumscribed in his thinking and viewpoint on life by the age and environment in which he lives. It is the height of nonsense to compare an alleged thinker of one age with that of another. No man can be evaluated, even if such a thing were valid, except in the context of his times. But evaluation itself assumes the exclusion of continuity in the direction of human affairs. Since insignificant influences cause momentous events and in the complex chain of causality, how can any link in this chain be considered as greater or less?

2. Christianity is the only religion the votaries of which eat their own God. This deistic cannibalism

is something the reader may speculate upon, along with the practitioners of magic, voodoo, and what have you.

*Published in "A Way Out"  
March/April 1966*

## What is It Really All About?

Aside from being an exercise in conversation (talking to myself) I usually sit at the typewriter maybe an hour a day, attempting to ascertain how far in my dotage I have gone—checking-up on what goes through my so-called mind—only to discover that what comes out is infused with a considerable degree of venom. It figures, since in the beginning of my concern with what makes humans tick I took a critical point of view.

At the moment I contemplate the millions of **uplifters** who actually do not seem to know what it is all about. In this corrupt rat-race society that we call our "way of life", even the well-meaning do-gooders aren't much other than petty racketeers. There must be tens of thousands of such groups and enterprises in New York City alone, each busily engaged in tending to each other's and their own wants: against war, sickness, and disease and what have you—each subsisting on the constant and innumerable solicitations for funds. As I indicated in one piece I wrote, if peace and security should

suddenly descend upon us, there would be the greatest disconcertment and consternation. All of these people, including the whole political and military apparati, together with all those who directly or indirectly support them (which includes everyone), would be put to rare straights to know what to do. I have even somewhat more than suggested that the whole boondoggling enterprise could be rationalized only if there were an enemy somewhere, and if one did not exist, one would have to be invented or manufactured. And what could be a more juicy plum ready to be plucked than a relatively rich and undeveloped country such as Viet Nam, whose hardy people could become very fine labourers for extracting wealth from their country in order to make profits for American "free enterprisers." God's in his heaven and all is right with the world.

Meanwhile I see many wise and righteous persons, all of whom are engaged in sociology, which is the "in" thing these days, with even the lowliest of victimized do-gooders quite able to rattle-off in sociological vernacular in an amazing manner. Just yesterday I saw a couple of old farty women smirking on TeeVee, demanding to see the President for equal rights for something or other. Thousands of Americans enjoying their misery even as they insist on doing something about it, no matter what. The American and world scene is in a condition where Bedlam and the Tower of Babel would seem to be peace and harmony in comparison. Edward Teller is a good guy while Eichmann is a fiend, although each is a victim of forces not only beyond their control but also far beyond their power of comprehensibility. But as I have also suggested elsewhere, each and every one of these two-legged creatures who perambulate on

this globe has one basic and fundamental urge; and that is to keep a stream of material coursing through their guts—for if they are not shit-manufacturing apparati they are nothing, not even alive. In plain words, humans, like all other animate matter, are first and foremost animated ass-holes; and all else that he is or is supposed to be is superimposed upon this bottom fact. And it is only in terms of this fact that his various shenanigans can be explained.

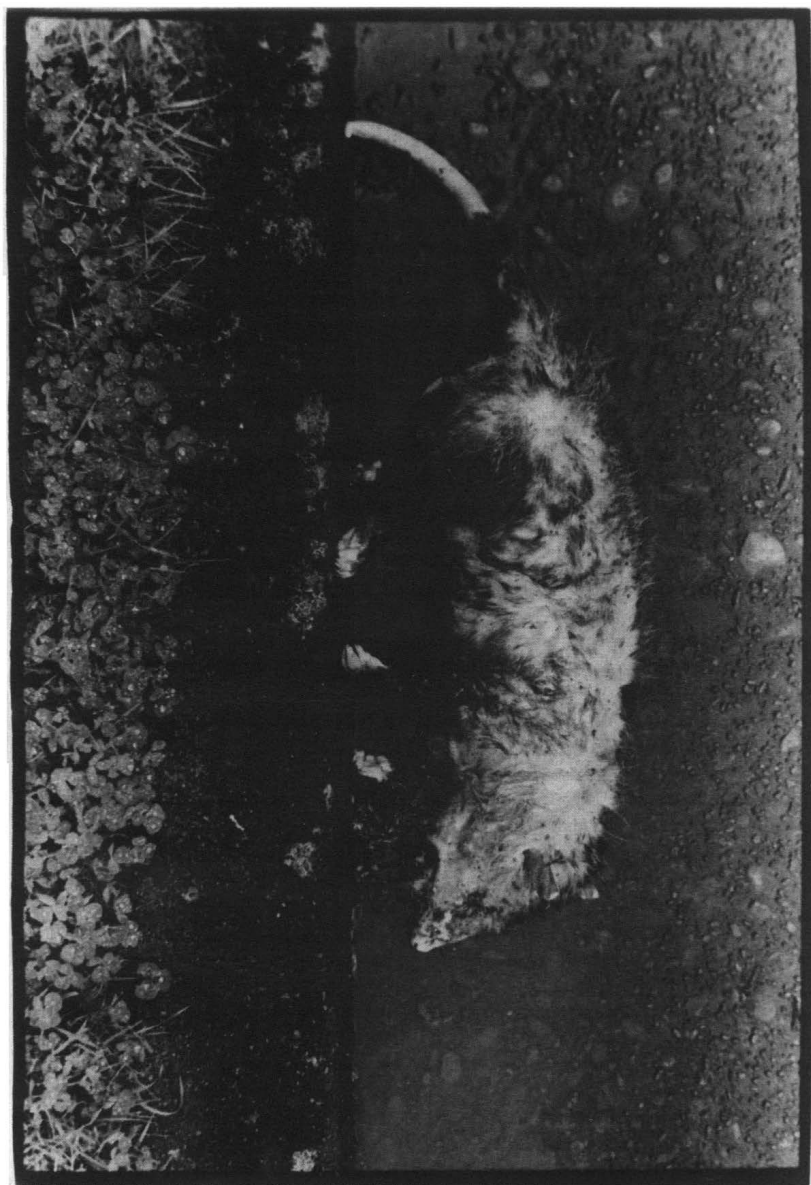
*November 23 1969*

## Waste Not Yourself

When I am dead  
Waste not yourself in either grief or joy  
Because of so,  
As I'll not know,  
And recompose, the spur to all we do,  
Will never come to you,  
Except as one in sounding glen bewails or sings  
And echo brings on airy wings  
The messages himself sent out.

—Joseph Labadie,  
*October 1911*







## **Recommended Reading**

### **Philosophical and Social Pessimism**

*\*The Conspiracy Against The Human Race*

by Thomas Ligotti

*The Philosophical Writings of Edgar Saltus* (A newly-issued collection that includes “The Philosophy of Disenchantment” and “The Anatomy of Negation”)

*Pessimism and Individualism* by Georges Palante

*The Last Messiah* by Peter Wessel Zapffe

*On The Tragic* by Peter Wessel Zapffe

*Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals*

by John Gray

### **Mutualism and Neo-Mutualism**

“Towards An Ungovernable Anarchism”

(*Contr’un* #1) by Shawn P. Wilbur

“Self-Government and the Citizen-State: Explorations in Proudhonian Sociology”

(*Contr’un* #2) by Shawn P. Wilbur

“The Anarchic Encounter”

(*Contr’un* #3) by Shawn P. Wilbur

*The Gift Economy of Property* by Shawn P. Wilbur

*The Unfinished Business of Liberty* by Shawn P. Wilbur

### **Food For Thought**

*The Gospel According to Malfew Seklew*

*Might Is Right* by Ragnar Redbeard

(One of Laurance Labadie’s favorite books. Is this an absolutely brilliant parody or just a truly fucked-up extended rant that, nonetheless, serves as a valuable reality-check for anarchist idealists?

You decide!)

### **Contemporary Journals of Intelligence**

*Attentat: A Journal of Collision*

*Modern Slavery: The Libertarian Critique of Civilization*

Labadie took a knife to the sentimental banalities of the anarchist jingoists and pruned away at the clogged jungle of anarchist clichés.

*from the introduction*

They who are the standard bearers of the prevailing capitalism prate of “rugged individualism,” which may be very good if they believed what was sauce for the goose was also sauce for the gander. It is not within the bounds of brief comment to state the nature and effects of capitalist privileges, privileges which assist sundry in living off the efforts of the real producers of wealth. But it is worthy to mention the spectacle, amusing were the effects not so tragic, of the recipients of government protection and coddling clamoring for liberty and rugged individualism.

*from Economic Adolescence*

Laurance Labadie (1898—1975) — son of Joseph Labadie, and like him involved in the labor movement of the day — was an American individualist anarchist, author, and publisher of *Discussion: a Journal for free Spirits*.

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